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THE PRACTICE

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OF WHAT IS CALLED

EXTEMPORE PREACHING

RECOMMENDED,

AND THE PROPRIETY AND ADVANTAGE OF THAT MODE OF

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

URGED AND SUPPORTED, BY ARGUMENTS

DEDUCED FROM

SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY,

PRIMITIVE EXAMPLE, HISTORIC FACTS, AND THE VERY
NATURE OF THE OFFICE:

BY A

CLERGYMAN

Rev. J. Glazebrook

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

"*Periculosa plenum opus aleæ*

"*Tractus; et incedis per ignes*

"*Suppositos cineri doloso.*" HORACE.

"*Extemporalis audaciæ, atque ipsius temeritatis vel præcipua jucunditas*
"est. Nam ingenio quoque, sicut in agro, quanquam alia diu ferantur
"atque elaborantur, *gratiora* tamen quæ *sua sponte* nascuntur." Dialog. &c.
qui ab aliis C. Cór. Tacito, a quibusdam M. Fab. Quintiliano tribuitur.

..... "And for me, that UTTERANCE may be given unto me, that I may open
my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." PAUL.

WARRINGTON,

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EXTENSIVE RESEARCHING

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PREFACE.

THOUGH I am conscious that if a work does not apologise for itself, and carry its own conviction and importance along with it, nothing that can be said, in a preface, will save it from that fate which, in the eyes of the public, it justly deserves, yet the subject of the following sheets is of such a nature as to require, perhaps, some little more explanation than may be found in the body of the work, or than could easily be introduced there. I feel the full import of the motto I have borrowed from Horace, am sensible of the need of all the caution it is calculated to suggest, and can truly say that I enter with fear and trembling upon the support of an opinion so very unpopular, and so contrary to the sentiments which most of the people in England entertain on the subject of preaching; and I may farther add, that my undertaking to maintain the propriety and necessity of laying aside the general use of written sermons, does not arise from any, the least fondness for differing from others, but from a persuasion that what I plead for is, upon the whole, right; and from a real belief that the plan of public instruction, which I take the liberty to recommend, is calculated to serve the in-

terests of religion, to raise the fallen credit of the clergy, to promote the prosperity of the established church, and to advance the spiritual good of mankind.

In this matter I have not gone hastily to work. The thoughts, which I now presume to publish, are the fruit of much study, much reading, much serious conversation and prayer. Neither have I been so confident as to depend solely upon my own judgment in an affair of such consequence. My papers have been perused by four very respectable clergymen, and one judicious layman; none of them over partial to that method of preaching for which I contend. I have endeavoured to improve by their valuable hints; and as my much esteemed friends approve of the design of the publication, I trust they will not have any cause to complain of my want of attention to their candid remarks.

It will scarcely be inquired, I should suppose, why the name of the author does not appear on the title page. A man may be diffident of the success of his performance, with the public, without being ashamed either of the cause he has espoused, or even his own manner of supporting it. But I am no Ishmaelite. I do not mean to throw down the gauntlet, or, in any way, to provoke hostilities; neither would I willingly make any man my enemy; and though a love of truth and faithfulness, especially in the ministers of Christ, has induced me to defend a practice, which some may suppose indefensible, there is no need either of my laying myself directly open to the attacks of opponents, or of diverting the attention of my readers from the sentiment,

ment, attempted to be maintained, to the name and circumstances of the author. If what is said be true, it matters not who has said it; and if it be not, a knowledge of the name of an author is not likely to give weight to that which, in itself, is of no signification.

That a reform, in our pulpit exercises is become highly necessary, many have ventured to assert, who, notwithstanding, have not come forward with any plan for the purpose; and to be sure, in most cases, it is much more easy to find fault than to contrive a suitable remedy. It will possibly be thought that I have blamed with a sufficient degree of freedom; and I own I intended to be plain: how far I have succeeded in the other part of my design, the public is now left to determine. But though a man is generally allowed to be a little partial to his own scheme, I am not so sanguine as to suppose the alteration, which is here recommended, would remove all abuses from the pulpit; nevertheless I believe the adopting of it would go far towards effecting the wished for change. It would, as is more fully explained hereafter, be reviving and restoring, what I must term, the only scriptural, primitive method of preaching, and is likely to beget that habit of study and thinking amongst the established clergy, to which too many of them, the Lord knows, are utter strangers. However, should what I have said answer no other purpose than that of putting some other persons upon seriously considering the subject, and exciting them to draw up a plan of reformation more perfect, and such as promises a more lasting benefit to

the church of God than that which I have sketched out, I shall think my time has been well employed. I love our establishment, though not for its emoluments, esteeming it the chief glory of our land; and shall be happy to see that reproach done away therefrom, which has been brought upon it by a long, and almost universal departure from the right way of preaching, and from the deplorably mistaken views which men have formed of the nature and end of the christian ministry.

Before I send my readers to the examination of the work, which is now put into their hands, I have two favours to request of them. The first is that they will excuse the number of notes, they will meet with there, and the introduction of a few Latin sentences, and not impute them to a love of ostentatious parade. The publication is new, and the argument supported therein will appear strange to some, because men have lost sight of the true models by which ministers are to be judged of, and by which they should try themselves and regulate their conduct; and therefore I saw it prudent to borrow all the countenance I had time to collect both from the scriptures of truth, and also from those authors who have published any opinion upon the subject; many of whose testimonies I could not well bring into the text: and without the least intention of insulting common readers, I have waded the translation of most of the Latin quotations, because the omission does not, in many particulars, as far as I can recollect, materially affect the sense, and because I considered a learned body of men as being more immediately concerned with the publication.

Secondly;

Secondly; I have to beg my readers will not forget that some little allowance should be made for an author's stile and manner. If a man write at all he must write like himself; and possibly no person needs more indulgence than the writer of the following work. I feel it no easy matter to curb a certain turn for satire, which is but too natural to me; and experience it rather difficult, in some instances, to soften my language, without injuring the sentiment intended to be conveyed. Persuaded that the Roman Wit had some little reason on his side, when he observes that, "*Ridiculum acri fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res,*" I am ready to say with the same poet, "*Ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?*"

Every thing however of this sort, bordering on the extreme, has been studiously guarded against in the final examination of my papers for the press; but should any thing of the kind have escaped me, I beg my readers will believe that nothing ill-natured is intended; and that I neither mean to "speak daggers, nor to use them;" and I farther hope it will be remembered that it is possible for a man, by habit, to lose sight so far of the full strength and import of his own expressions, that what may appear very unexceptionable to him, may seem harsh and offensive to others. These few particulars being premised, I forbear a farther multiplication of apologies lest I should be suspected of entertaining a design to arrest the judgment of my readers, or to enter a prudent caveat against deserved censure, or dreaded animadversion. If I have done well, and

as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired : but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto. *Satisfied, however, with the rectitude of my own views, I cheerfully leave, what is said, to stand or fall at the bar of the public, according to the merit of the execution ; and whether its fate be prosperous or adverse, I trust I can with some degree of confidence say,*

Æquum mihi animum ipse parabo.

Should any person be disposed to controvert what I have endeavoured to maintain, they have my free leave ; but I never mean to enter the lists with them. " What I have written, I have written."

Here I intended to close my introductory remarks ; but I have just met with a poem of Dr. Byrom's, the sentiments of which so perfectly accord with my own, on the subject of extempore preaching, that I cannot, I think, do better than conclude my preface therewith ; sincerely hoping, that after a little serious reflection on the considerations therein proposed, my readers will be inclined to weigh, with increased candour, what I have written upon the same argument.

*" The hint I gave, some time ago,**

" Brethren, about your reading slow,

" You took, it seems ; and thereupon

" Could make two sermons out of one :

" Now this regard to former lines,

" Paid so successfully, inclines

" To send advice the second part :

" Try if you cannot preach by heart.

* Alluding to a poem addressed to the Rev. Messrs — on reading slow.

" Be not alarm'd, as if regard
 " *To this* would prove so *very hard* ;
 " The first admonishment you fear'd
 " Would so turn out, till it appear'd
 " That custom only made to seem,
 " So difficult in your esteem
 " What, upon trial, now procures
 " Your hearers' ease, and also your's.

" Do but consider how the case
 " Now stands in fact, in every place,
 " All Christendom almost, around,
 " Except on our reformed ground :
 " The greatest part untaught to brook
 " The preachers *reading from a book*,
 " Would scarce advance within his reach,
 " Or, then, *acknowledge him to preach*.

" Long after preaching first began,
 " How unconceiv'd the *reading plan* !
 " The rise of which, whatever date
 " May be assign'd to it, *is late* :
 " From all *antiquity remote*
 " The *manuscriptal reading rote* :
 " No need, no reason prompted, then,
 " The *pulpit* to consult the *pen*.

" However well prepar'd before,
 " By pond'ring, or by writing o'er
 " What he should say, still it was SAID
 " By him that preach'd, it was not READ.
 " Could ancient memory, then, better
 " Forbear the poring o'er the letter,
 " Brethren than yours ? if you'll but try,
 " That fact I'll venture to deny.

" Moderns,

" Moderns, of late, give proofs enow
 " (Too many as it seems to you)
 " That matters of religious kind,
 " Stor'd up within the thoughtful mind,
 " With any care and caution stor'd,
 " Sufficient utterance afford,
 " To tell the audience what they think,
 " Without the help of PEN and INK.

" How apt to think too, is the throng,
 " A preacher short, a reader long !
 " Claiming, itself, to be the book
 " That should attract a pastor's look :
 " If you lament a careless age
 " Averse to hear the pulpit page,
 " Speak from *within*, not from *without*,
 " And heart to heart will turn about,

" Try it, and if you *can't* succeed,
 " 'Twill then be *right* for you to read ;
 " Altho' the heart, if that's your choice,
 " Must still accompany the voice ;
 " And tho' you should succeed, and take
 " The hint, you must not, *merely*, make
 " Preaching *Extempore* the view,
 " But EX ÆTERNITATE TOO.

Byrom's Poems, vol. I. p. 124.

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The above author has another most excellent poem upon the same subject, written, by way of dialogue, in the Lancashire Dialect ; wherein there are many striking thoughts, with much strength and propriety of reasoning, which I would request all those to read, with attention, who can have access to the work.

THE PRACTICE
OF WHAT IS CALLED
EXTEMPORE PREACHING,
RECOMMENDED.

NEXT to the saving reception of gospel truth itself, and a real experimental acquaintance with its genuine operations on the mind, no inquiry, I presume, can be more important, or more justly claim the serious attention of every faithful christian minister, than that which tends to discover and ascertain, with tolerable precision, what is the most scriptural, and most effectual way of inculcating, and enforcing that truth upon others. This has frequently engaged the conversation of myself and friends, when together; it has often been the subject matter of my serious meditation, when alone, and I now venture to make my thoughts thereupon public, desiring no other favour of my readers than that they will candidly consider what is here asserted, and be ready to admit the force of an argument, whether it make for or against them. And this I conceive to be the temper of mind with which we should examine all disputed opinions.

That

That the preaching of God's most holy word is a business of the greatest concern, all must grant who recollect, that it is of divine appointment; that it is the highly honoured means by which God is generally pleased to make known his will to mankind, to make manifest the Saviour's name, to enforce and display the full import and intention of the gospel to a fallen world; and has therefore nothing less for its object than to prevent the eternal misery, and to promote the everlasting salvation of men. It follows then, that every minister, when he stands up in the congregation, stands, as *Aaron* did, *between the living and the dead*; nay more, as an ambassador of Christ he is vested with a right to consider himself as having received a commission from the Almighty, to address every individual before him in the words of the prophet to the heathen king, "I have a message from God unto thee." Judg. iii. 20.

But the question is, how this message should be delivered; whether it should be *read* from a written preparation, or whether it should be delivered in, what is *improperly* called, the *extempore* way? I say *improperly* so called, because the term, as it is generally understood, in no wise answers to my idea of the scripture method of preaching, and is only applicable to the *random, rhapsodical effusions, and senseless jargon of the wild enthusiast*.* The minister of

* "If a minister be a stranger to order or method, he is a *rhapsodist* not a *preacher*, and his sermon is a *chaos*, not a *well-ordered discourse*." Edwards's Preacher, vol. I. p. 252.

Christ scorns to offer in sacrifice to God of that which costs him nothing. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. He acknowledges truth to be of such infinite importance that it ought to have every advantage on its side; and therefore he endeavours to gain a just and comprehensive view of the subject, he is about to preach upon, by previous, serious meditation, careful mental arrangement, and, above all, by earnest prayer to God for the gracious aids of his spirit, that his "mouth may be opened, and his heart enlarged."*

My opinion is that the mind of the minister should be quite *unshackled*, and free from all unnecessary restraint; and that every thing tending to cramp its native vigour and activity, should be carefully removed; and the purport of this publication is to shew

* "The minister should go from his knees to the pulpit."
Cotton Mathers Student and Preacher.

It was an usual saying of Luther "bene orasse, est bene studuisse." The maxim, I am certain, for the most part, will be found a good one; for though prayer and study should be always united, in our preparations for the pulpit, yet whenever the minister is in a *praying* frame, he will, I apprehend, be in a *preaching* frame too.

"We must first pray, and then preach, says St. Chrysostom." I beseech thee, O Lord, says St. Ambrose, put into my mouth the word of consolation, edification and exhortation, that I may be able to exhort the righteous to go on to greater perfection, and reduce those that walk perversely, to the rule of thy righteousness, both by my word and by my example. Let the word which thou givest to thy servant be as the sharpest darts and
burning

shew why I am of this sentiment. I am induced the more readily to undertake this *delicate, hazardous* talk, because, from the perusal of a pamphlet, in which the arguments for and against that method of preaching for which I plead are briefly stated, written a few years ago by a clergyman, of whose learning, good sense and solid piety there can be no doubt, and from whose pen nothing uncandid or ill founded can fall, I am fully persuaded very little can be said on the other side of the question. I mean not to enter upon a formal refutation of the arguments there adduced, in favour of written sermons, neither shall I take any further notice of them than simply to own my astonishment, that the practice, of reading sermons in the pulpit, should ever become so general, or that any man of sense should ever think of appearing, as an advocate, in such a cause.

An extempore preacher, I know, is by most looked upon as a kind of monster, and fit object for ridicule and banter; and I am sorry to find the very idea of it despised by persons, whose liberality of sentiment, in other respects, and whose extensive acquaintance with men and things might lead us

burning arrows, which may penetrate and inflame the minds of my hearers to thy fear and love." See Bingham's Antiquities, vol. VI. p. 489. &c. If the study of our sermons be not accompanied by prayer, we make no difference between preparations for the pulpit, and getting ready a lecture in any of the arts and sciences. A most *degrading* idea this!

to expect much less severity of censure from them. "A sort of extemporary preaching from short notes," is language which, though very easily adopted, carries with it that air of indignant scorn and exultation, which it would be prudent in a writer to suppress, till he has taken the trouble to prove that *absolute error* is the butt of his burlesque. This avowed friend of written sermons ought to know, that even preaching from memory, in a neighbouring country, where *pulpit reading* was never practised, has been as strongly opposed as ever extempore preaching was in England. "Consider," says the pious archbishop of Cambray, "the advantage that a preacher must have who does not get his sermon by heart (but is satisfied with having a well-digested plan of it in his memory). He is entirely master of himself. He speaks in an easy, unaffected manner, and not like a formal declaimer." Treatise on Eloq. p. 107. Neither its national *universality*, if I may so say, its *long continuance*, nor even the *rule of expediency* can render that custom right which is in itself wrong; and this is most, if I mistake not, which readers of sermons have to plead; of course therefore, if innovators are to be held forth as objects of contempt, the man, with his notes before him, has much greater cause to tremble and blush, than he who appears in the pulpit with the Bible alone for his companion. In this kingdom, the former has the multitude on his side; poor ground for triumph!

Yet

Yet this is his only advantage over the extempore preacher. That the prevailing opinion, as to the proper method of preaching, is wrong, I hope hereafter to be able to evince; at present I shall content myself with recommending to the perusal of my readers, and especially to those who labour under the above mistake, a passage in Bishop Wilkins's *Gift of Prayer and Preaching*, p. 14. For though the worthy prelate is there speaking of *extempore prayer*; the remark will hold good in both cases. "If, says he, it be a fault not to strive and labour after this gift, (the ability to pray without a *written form*) much more to despise it, by the name of *extempore prayer*; and praying by the *spirit*; which expressions, as they are generally used by some men, by way of reproach, are for the most part, the sign of a *profane heart*." I have made this digression, not in order to beg the question, but in hopes of giving a serious cast to the argument, and of securing the candid attention of my readers, whilst I proceed to shew,

In the first place, that reading sermons cannot receive the least countenance from the word of God, and must for ever disclaim the least shadow of support either from scripture *precept*, or scripture *example*. If the prophets were commanded to *record* any thing in a book, it was for the use of the *future*, rather than the *present generation*. Is. xxx. 8. Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, under various circumstances, seem to have spoken
according

according to the impressions of the present moment. And whoever reads Nehem. viii. to verse ninth, will meet with, what I conceive to be, a case in point. There all the Jews were convened by public authority. The causes for which this assembly was called together were extremely critical, and the purposes to be answered thereby serious and perplexing; and of course, if ever a written address were necessary, it certainly must be so on an occasion so trying and important. And yet the idea never seems to have entered into the mind of Ezra. He solemnly opened the book in the sight of the people; and then he, with other Levites of eminence, *read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense*, just as *zeal* for God, the *ordinary* influences of the spirit, present circumstances and common understanding dictated.

To say that they were *extraordinarily* inspired, in the present instance, would be preposterous. None of the persons, who took the lead in the serious service of the day, made any pretensions thereto. The whole of their proceedings evince that they did not act by immediate direction from heaven, but corrected abuses and established those regulations which they believed to be agreeable to the divine law, according as they were inclined thereunto by a well informed judgment, and genuine piety towards God. Perhaps indeed, there are fewer traces of *extraordinary* inspiration in the books of Nehemiah, Ezra and Esther than in all the other parts of

the Bible. "All Scripture is," undoubtedly, "given by inspiration of God," but in many cases, this *inspiration*, I apprehend, is to be sought for and discovered, not in a sudden direction of men to the choice of particular words and phrases, but as it operated in secretly determining them to the adopting of particular measures for the accomplishment of certain ends; and as it superintended the writings and actions of the prophets and apostles, so as to preserve the analogy of faith, to maintain a consistency in the whole canon of revelation, and in the wise dispensations of God.

The book of Job, though ennobled with all the bold imagery of eastern figure and hyperbole, and embellished with all the grandeur and grace which may be expected from the pen of an inspired poet; yet, stripped of these ornaments, it appears to be a real history, founded on fact. The different interlocutors, who took their various parts in the debate, spake with wonderful propriety and pertinency, though they had not a book amongst them; and probably there was not then a book in the world. All their answers and defences were *impromptu*, and justly applied to the speeches before delivered; but that they *were not divinely inspired* is clear from the charge, which the Almighty brought against them, of "not having spoken of him the thing which was right as his servant Job had done." I readily grant that the story has gained much from being related by Moses, as most suppose, and from
its

its being clothed in a poetic dress; nevertheless he must be allowed to have given us the substance of what was spoken, in this free debate of Job and his friends; and the inference I would draw from hence is, that if plain men, at this early age of the world, unaided by, what is called, a liberal education, could go on in a continued discourse upon religion; and talk sense without a book, our advancements in knowledge, in this age of refinement, leave us little room for boasting, if our clergy cannot address their people for thirty or forty minutes, upon any divine subject, without the help of a book.*

Our Lord's conduct will not, I suppose, be allowed as a fair allusion in the present case, because "he spake as never man spake;" and because "God gave not the spirit by measure unto him;" but we must not forget that he is set forth as our great pattern, and therefore, as far as his example is imitable, we ought to *follow his steps*. He never

* How contrary is such an opinion to the judgment of the Archbishop of Cambray? He thinks that "a priest who understands the scriptures fully, and has the gift of speaking, supported by the authority of his function, and of a good life, might make excellent discourses *without much preparation*. For one speaks easily of such truths, as make a clear, and strong impression on his mind." Treat. on Eloq. According therefore to the sentiments of Fenelon, if men cannot preach without a book, and without a great deal of preparation, it is because they do not feel sufficiently.

made use of notes in preaching, much less did he ever impose such a wearisome burden on his followers. When he entered into the synagogue at Nazareth, Luke iv. 16. he opened the book, took his text, perhaps from the *lesson for the day*, shut it again, and then began his discourse to the people before him. He never directed his disciples to use written sermons, but, on the contrary, for their comfort, qualification and encouragement, graciously engaged "to give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries should not be able to gain-say or resist." If therefore the use of written sermons is contrary to every thing we know of the conduct of the prophets, to the example of our Lord, and to the directions given to his disciples, during his abode with them upon earth; and if the practice receives no sanction from any part thereof, men should be cautious how they introduce, or venture to plead for a custom which the Great Head of the church has no where recommended, nor in any way enjoined.

I feel no difficulty in admitting that the apostles were endued with the *extraordinary* gifts of the Holy Ghost; had, in many instances, *the power of Christ, in a supereminent degree, resting upon them*, were frequently carried beyond themselves, and *spoke as they were inwardly moved by the spirit of God*. But I dare not say it was always so with them. It is not my wish to shock the feelings of any of my readers by, what some may esteem, a *bold and*
hazardous

bazardous assertion; but I greatly question whether, after having attentively read those epitomes of sermons, which we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, a man must not be obliged to own, that the wonderful effects which attended the preaching of St. Paul, St. Peter, and others, were not owing so much to the now unattainable excellence of their discourses, in their substance and management, as to the *power* and *unction* of the Holy Ghost which accompanied the delivery of them. God forbid that I should say any thing tending to derogate from the glory and authenticity of the written word, but I am inclined to think, that the discourses of the apostles, in general, are such as we may suppose every man of piety, prudence, education and good ministerial abilities would deliver on similar occasions. See Acts ii. 13. 41. vii. 11, 12. &c. xvii. 22. &c. xxii. 1. xxiv. 10. &c. xxvi. 1. &c. Let any man of candour, deliberately consider the above passages, and then I cannot help believing that the discourses of the apostles, in common cases, will appear to him such as do not require any more assistance from God, either in the conception or delivery of them, than what all, who are truly called to the ministry, ought to pray for, and have a right to expect upon his authority who has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." *

* In this respect St. Augustine asserts more than I dare contend for. He declares that a minister should consider those words of our Lord as belonging to every pious soul: "Take no thought what you shall speak," &c. See a note farther on.

It may not be amiss to inquire what was the conduct of the primitive church, as to the manner of preaching the word, at that time. For though the method of public instruction, practised by the immediate successors of the apostles, differed widely from our's, the discourses of the fathers being usually a kind of *exhortation* or *harangue* upon some particular topic; a psalm or a paragraph, out of some part of the word of God, being chosen to enlarge upon; or else a number of parallel scriptures were collected together and read, and a general doctrine raised from thence; yet, it will appear, that whatever their method was, they were ignorant of written preparations; and so far were they from being in constant and general use, it will be proved, from what will be hereafter said, that they were *never* used in the *manner we now use them*.

Whether the homilies of Chrysostom and others were written *before* or *after*, or *at the time* of delivery, by persons appointed for that purpose; or whether they, on special occasions, read them, or delivered them *memoriter*, has little to do with the present enquiry; because could it be proved that they did read them, particular examples are an insufficient rule for general practice; and our advancement, in the argument, would be trifling indeed to say, which never can be proved, that, in certain cases, they read *some*, unless it can be proved they read *all*. But, though I do not mean to rest the matter here, were I to venture a conjecture of my own,

own, in a point which is involved in some degree of obscurity, I should be led to think, that many of the discourses of the fathers, which are handed down to us, are private recollections of what they had delivered in public; and that they were afterwards published, at the request of the people; or, it may be, were intended as standards and illustrations of the christian doctrine; and on that account were afterwards dispersed, for the benefit of those who had not the opportunity of attending the ministry of those eminent characters, whose names they severally bear.

It is an unfortunate circumstance, in the present business, where deeply rooted vulgar prejudices are to be contended with, that they who have studied the fathers, and attempted to collect evidence therefrom, as to the plan of public preaching pursued by them, were men who were manifestly attached to *written sermons*; and who, from seeing the abuses which some had run into, who were called *extempore preachers*, in order to prevent such irregularities, with the best motives that authors could act from, have unwittingly perplexed the question, by drawing a veil over the truth, and deducing those consequences from historic facts, which, when carefully examined, they cannot be allowed to furnish. These men seem not to be able to separate the idea of *reading sermons*, in the primitive churches, from the circumstance of our having many volumes of sermons or homilies published by the fathers;

whereas the truth is, that *written discourses*, if ever used, which I cannot allow, and even the *previous study* of sermons, was, in a great measure, peculiar to the younger and inferior clergy. Neither do we find that the writing, and laboured composition of sermons was ordinarily urged even upon the younger clergy. St. Austin, having expressed an unwillingness to preach before certain bishops, when he was young, received the following answer. *Ask and it shall be given thee, for it is not ye that speak, but that which is given unto you, ye minister unto us.** The reading of lectures in divinity schools, practised by Origen and others, has no concern with the present debate. It is natural to suppose that the new converts to christianity, especially, would wish to have copies of the sermons delivered by those ministers who had been instrumental in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth; and many, no doubt, found their account in taking down the sermons of the most eminent preachers of that day, and afterwards selling the copies; and therefore, as the ministers then preached *without notes*, though not always without *previous study*, there were men who were named *ταχυγραφοι*, or *short-hand* writers, who penned the discourses of those ministers who were esteemed most famous in their day.

* “ Si sermo deest, pete et accipies. Non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed quod datur vobis, hoc ministratis nobis.” See Bing. Antiquities, vol. VI. chap. iv. p. 486.

I do not understand, neither can I credit what Bingham says upon this head, namely, that Origen was the first who ventured to preach in the *real extempore* (i. e.) *unpremeditated* way.* If he means that Origen was the first who permitted the ταχυγραφοι to take down his sermons, I shall not dispute with him, though certainly he might have expressed himself more intelligibly. He tells us however, that when Origen had attained to the sixtieth year of his age, he had acquired the habit of preaching *extempore*, that is, without *previous study*; and that then he suffered the ταχυγραφοι to take down his discourses, which he never would do before. We are told by the same author, that Origen preached *extempore* almost daily, and that his sermons were taken from his mouth by the notaries; that the catechetical discourses of St. Cyril are supposed to be of this kind, because at the beginning of most of them it is said in the title to be Σχδιασμοις,† an *extempore discourse*. St. Chrysostom delivered these *extempore* (*unpremeditated*) discourses frequently.

* This matter is afterwards better explained by Bingham, vol. VI. p. 535. where he observes, from Eusebius, that Origen did not suffer the notaries to take down his sermons till he was sixty years of age.

† Whether the copier meant to pay St. Cyril a compliment, I will not say, but it is scarcely credible that so great a man would go through a course of lectures without studying his subject. Possibly the term may not imply that there was no previous thought about them; and perhaps the whole we ought to gather from the title is, that they were not *laboured discourses*.

Ruffin

Ruffin says he has translated twenty of the discourses of Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil, which were delivered in that way. The like account is given of Atticus, whose sermons were so well received by his hearers, that they took them down in writing. St. Austin often preached upon places of scripture which were accidentally read in the church, and which he had thought nothing of before he came thither. He himself says, that on a certain day he came to church with a determination to preach upon a particular psalm, but that the reader, through hurry or mistake, read another, and he therefore preached upon that psalm, which was read, without any previous study.*

If the fathers did not preach without a written preparation, what can we think of the manner in which they often introduced their discourses? When St. Austin had laid out his subject, and told his audience what points of doctrine he meant to handle, it was usual with him to add, *quantum Deus donaverit*. He, and others before him, frequently prayed for present assistance from above, and exhorted their hearers to pray for them. This would have been impious trifling, both with God and them, had they precluded all possibility of divine assistance, as to any important enlargement in their

* A variety of farther evidence, upon this head, may be obtained by consulting Bingham, vol. VI. chap. iv. p. 483, 489, &c.

discourses, by bringing a written sermon in their pockets !*

Most of the mistakes, relative to the preaching of the ancients, might have been avoided, had men attended to the distinction of Sidonius Apollinaris. He divides sermons into two classes, in his letter to Faustus bishop of Riez ; namely, *prædicationes repentinae*, and *prædicationes elucubratae*.† Unfortunately, for the cause of religion, custom has of late added a third class, which the ancients knew nothing about : and this third class, (i. e.) the *prædicationes scriptæ*, (written sermons) has nearly thrust out the other two. The ministers of our day seem to have forgotten that a sermon may be *studied* and *laboured* without being committed to writing. Writing therefore, for the pulpit, is absolutely a novel idea. For my own part, I would not even exclude the *prædicationes repentinae*, (totally unpremeditated discourses) because I would wish every minister to be *apt* and *ready to teach* ; but the *prædicationes elucubratae*, studied sermons, for that is the meaning of the term as above used, are what I most approve.

* It is the opinion of the Archbishop of Cambray, after Cicero, that though all the parts of a discourse should be ranged exactly in the memory, &c. yet that we are so to use this preparation, as to be ready off hand, to add whatever may be occasionally suggested, from a view of the audience, or unexpected accidents. See his Treatise on Eloq. p. 110, 111.

† “ Licet *prædicationes tuas, nunc repentinas, nunc, cum ratio poposcerit, elucubratas, raucus plausor audierim.*”

The

The *ταχυγραφοι*, or short-hand writers, were a useful set of men before the discovery of printing; but if sermons had been then *written*, the interruption they must have given in the church, to those who sat near them, might have been easily prevented by the preachers lending them their notes; and if this was not done, the reason must be obvious, *they had none to lend.*

Dr. Edwards, in his *Preacher*, a work recommended by the present bishop of Chester, though he evidently inclines too much towards *written discourses*, after telling us that both the Greeks and Latins sometimes read their speeches, that Gregory the Great, St. Austin and others, at certain times, procured their discourses to be written, and read by others in the church,* when they were weak and incapable

* Had the doctor proved that these great men *read their own discourses* to the people, it might have had some weight in favour of *written sermons*, but informing us that they were *read by others* is no more to the purpose, than if he had reminded us of the circumstance of Baruch's reading the roll, which he wrote from the lips of Jeremiah, or had alledged this in support of written sermons. It was indeed seldom that either Greeks or Latins read their speeches; and it is worthy remark, that their historians never transcribe any of them, but give us the substance of them, clothed in their own language. The Archbishop of Cambray's account of this matter differs materially from that of Dr. Edwards. "We know very well," says that good prelate, "that the ancient orators composed and wrote their harangues before they *spoke* them in public; but that they did not get them by *heart*, *word* for *word*, we have several reasons to prove. Even the orations of Demosthenes, as we have them, shew rather the
"sublimity

incapable of doing it themselves; and that Luther preached out of the book for an *example* to others; * nevertheless, at last, "out of the honest truth" he is constrained to add, "but nothing of this that I have said is to disparage the gift of memory,

"sublimity and vehemence of a great genius, that was accustomed to speak powerfully of public affairs, than the *accuracy* and *politeness* of an author. As for Cicero, in several places of his harangues, we find things spoken on sudden emergencies, that he could not possibly have foreseen." This remark of the bishop is confirmed by Cicero himself. "*Si quis cum causam sit acturus, in itinere aut in ambulatione secum ipse meditetur*—" non reprehendatur," &c.

* That preaching *out of the book* was far from being the general custom of that wonderful man, is evident from various passages in his life, though he might have done it *sometimes* by way of example and reproof to certain ministers, who had not sufficient experience in the ministry to do without such helps; though it can in no wise excuse those who are content to go on in the *jog-trot* way, without endeavouring to attain this essential qualification of the minister, which it is my intention to recommend. Luther, no doubt, had his trials from forward young men, and it particularly concerned him, at that time, to be upon his guard, surrounded, as he was, by enemies, who were prepared to take every advantage against him and his party. I have somewhere heard, that he was once present in a church, at a time when the timid Melancthon attempted to preach upon those words of our Lord, "I am the good shepherd," but that either being overawed by the presence of Luther, or having his ideas bewildered, from some other cause of embarrassment, he could not advance one sentence in his sermon; and that Luther, seeing his situation, bid him leave the pulpit, telling him he was a pretty *good sheep*, but a *sorry shepherd*; and that then he himself went up and preached. I do not however recollect that Melancthon was blamed for not taking his notes with him.

"which

“ which is a *desirable* and *choice* talent, and particularly is of great use to the pastors of the church. “ Such of them as are blessed with a tenacious memory, ought to exert it, if those inconveniences, “ which I have mentioned before, be taken care of “ and prevented. Yea, if that faculty be not so “ strong and vivid in some of them as that of “ others, they will do well to amend the fault of it “ by art, that they may be more capable of *doing* “ *good* in this part of their ministry.” *

Enough perhaps has been said to account for so many of the sermons of the fathers being handed down to us ; nevertheless, I cannot dismiss this part of my subject without a farther investigation, the right understanding of it being so essential to the establishing of my chief design. Bingham says the public notaries were frequently allowed, by the authors’ consent, to publish what they had written. In which case it was usual for the preacher to review his own dictates, and to correct such mistakes, and supply such deficiencies as might be occasioned by the haste of the scribe, or alter some things which were not so accurately spoken in *sudden* and *extempore discourses*. This is evident from what Gregory the Great says in his preface to his homilies upon Ezekiel ; i. e. that those homilies were first taken *from his mouth as he spake them* to the people, and that after eight years, at the request of his brethren, he collected them from the papers of the notaries,

* Edwards’s Preacher, vol. I. p. 221.

and reviewed, corrected and amended them. So again in his preface upon Job he says some of the homilies were composed, (either before or after he delivered the substance of them in public) and others were taken down by the notaries; and those which were taken down by them, when he had reviewed them, adding some things, and rejecting others, and leaving many things as he found them, that then, with such emendations, he composed them into books and published them. But many times the notaries published what they had written *without the author's consent*. In which case we find them sometimes remonstrating against this, as a clandestine practice. Thus Gaudentius says, “ he “ did not own those homilies as his, which were first “ taken by the notaries, *latently* and by *stealth*, and “ then published by others, *imperfectly* and by halves, “ with great chasms and interruptions in them. “ He would not therefore acknowledge them for “ his discourses which the notaries had written in “ extreme haste, and published without giving him “ any opportunity to supervise and correct them.” In proportion as vital christianity declined, the interest of superstition was too successfully served by representing the fathers as prodigies of piety, whose attainments, in sanctity, it was presumptuous for persons, in succeeding ages, to hope to arrive at; consequently, an extravagant veneration was entertained for their memory, their writings were sought after with the utmost avidity; and as the idle race
of

of recluses had sufficient time for this business, they made a merit of collecting them, and reducing them to that order in which we now have them; and for these reasons it is not at all strange that such loads of them have been preserved, and names given to many of them, whose true, legitimate father it would be difficult to demonstrate.*

But besides the custom of taking down sermons by public notaries, "many of the hearers (of the fathers) learned the art of notaries, whom the Greeks called *ἱεργραφοί*, and *ταχυνγραφοί*, ready writers, that they might be able to take down, in writing, the sermons of famous preachers, word for word as they delivered them; by which means many of their extempore sermons were handed down to posterity, which must otherwise have died in the speaking,"† and therefore it must be rather matter of surprize that we have not more of these discourses, than that we should have so many of them, though they were not penned by the authors themselves.

Had the skill of Dr. Edwards and Mr. Bingham, in the arrangement of their materials, and their impartiality in the representation of facts, equalled their diligence in collecting them, it would have saved me much trouble in this part of my under-

* From the reputation of the fathers I desire not to detract. Good men they were, but we should not think more highly of them than they deserve.

† See Bingham, vol. VI. p. 534.

taking;

taking; but their unfortunate bias for written sermons has occasioned a wretched perplexity and visible inconsistency in their statement of historic evidence, which an honest disregard for general example would have easily prevented. However, from a candid examination of what they have said, and by collecting and comparing all the circumstances together, which I have been capable of obtaining, I will venture to assert, first, that ministers did not read their *own* sermons to the people in the primitive church:* secondly, that when the sermons or homilies of others were read by the deacons, which was sometimes done, when the stated ministers of the place happened to be ill, they were read as the sermons of *others*, and not *palmed* upon the people as the fruit of their own study: thirdly, that though even some of the bishops stooped so low as to commit the sermons of other men to memory, in order to deliver them to their congrega-

* It has been said, that the example of ministers in the primitive church, is not our rule of conduct, and I do not undertake to prove that it is; but as these men must be supposed to follow the example of the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, they who do not think themselves bound to pursue their practice, ought at least to allow that their example must furnish a satisfactory apology for those who esteem it their duty to tread in their steps; and they should learn from thence to exercise a little charity towards men who are rather more scrupulous than themselves, and who do not think they are left at liberty to chalk out new ways of preaching, and who cannot believe a custom lawful, *merely* because it is no where *expressly* forbidden.

D

tions,

tions, and though St. Austin tenderly apologizes for such, yet the censures which these steps drew upon those who ventured to take them, prove that such instances were singular; that such expedients were then esteemed *disgraceful innovations*, and must therefore serve to shew how early men were prone to seek a shelter for their own ignorance, to indulge their own pride, idleness and vanity, by departing from the scripture method of preaching.

Of the custom of preaching from *written preparations* the Church of England has long stood a solitary example. "*Reading*" (sermons) we are told by bishop Burnet, "is *peculiar* to this nation, and is *endured* in no other."* The general practice, both of protestants and papists abroad, is against us. Whether their ministers preach *memoriter* or not it is needless to inquire. The very term *memoriter*, shews that the ministers, who stoop to that *slavish* method, in fact, declare that preaching *without a book* is *the right way* of preaching. If they have notes, they leave them in their study, or keep them in their pockets; and every departure from this rule is therefore a deviation from general example amongst foreigners. A native of Switzerland, who was a clergyman of our church, whom all, who had the happiness of

* Pastoral Care, p. 205. "I shall now mention a particular, "wherein your *whole body* (the clergy) will be against me, and the "*laity*, almost to a man, on my side. However it came about, I cannot get over the prejudice of taking some little offence at the "*clergy* for perpetually *reading* their sermons; perhaps my frequent "*hearing* of foreigners, who *never make use of notes*, may have "*added to my disgust.*" Dean Swift.

knowing,

knowing, remember with veneration, and whose veracity may be safely depended upon, said he was one day present in a church in Geneva, where a young man was preaching who happened to be so far confused as not to be able to recover the thread of his discourse; that in this perplexity he took out his notes, and finished his sermon from them; but he added, that the circumstance occasioned as much wonder and surprise in that city, as we may suppose an *extempore sermon* would do, were it delivered in St. Margaret's, Westminster, or St. Paul's Cathedral.*

Written

* Preaching *memoriter*, is, to be sure, poor mechanical work. If a man can recollect the general and particular heads of his discourse, I see little more that the memory has to do for him. Let the preacher make a proper choice of, fully understand, and heartily enter into his subject, and then suitable words will present themselves.

..... "Cui lecta potenter erit res,

"Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo." Horace.

Bishop Wilkins also speaks much to the same purpose. "As for the manner of composing sermons," he observes, "it will not be convenient for one that is a constant preacher to *pen* all his discourses, or to tie himself to phrases. When we have the matter and notion well digested, the expression of it will easily follow, whereas to be confined to particular words, besides the great oppression of the memory, will likewise much prejudice the operations of the mind; the judgment will be much weakened, and the affections dulled, when the memory is overmuch burdened and vexed." Gift of Preaching, p. 202.

"Though all sermons in Scotland," says bishop Burnet's biographer, "were delivered without book, yet were they premeditated

Written preparations, I have been told, are become common about the court in Sweden; the custom also of *reading* sermons to the people, by their ministers, spreads in Scotland, as it almost universally obtains amongst the presbyterians in England. But why is it so? Is it not because the life of religion is, in a great measure, lost amongst them? Is it not also partly on this account, that the ministers do not like the trouble of gaining the habit, or are unwilling to incur the reproach of

“discourses, first written, and then learned by heart; which was
 “a loss of time Mr. Nairn could not bear, and therefore soon
 “put our author (bishop Burnet) upon attempting to preach ex-
 “tempore, which he continued to practise all the rest of his life.
 “And he attained to an easiness in it, chiefly by allotting many
 “hours in the day to meditation upon all sorts of subjects, and by
 “accustoming himself, at those times, (as will be seen more at
 “large farther on in the work) to speak his thoughts, studying
 “to render his expression correct.”

That slavish method of preparing discourses, for the pulpit, which the bishop and Mr. Nairn, so much to their credit, disdained to comply with, if I mistake not, is called by the Scotch divines *manding* their sermons, that is, committing them to memory, which I should say, if I were not unwilling to irritate, is acting like the toiling *school-boy* in their study, and like *parrots* in the pulpit. And if many of their discerning hearers were to speak their minds, they would be of the opinion of the gentleman who lately said, “I have no notion of this repeating of sermons by rote; the man will never get a congregation.” St. Austin thought that “they who get their sermons by heart, word for word, must lose one great end and benefit of preaching;” and therefore he “only prepared his subject, without *burdening his memory* with all the words of his sermon.” Archbishop of Cambray.

preaching

preaching without a book ? Are they not in doubt whether the carnal, worldly spirit of their hearers will submit to this ?

I do not speak at random here. It is not long since the members of a certain congregation, not twenty miles from Liverpool, were dreadfully alarmed with the apprehension of their minister becoming an *extempore preacher* ; and I dare say, both ministers and people, of the above description, felicitate themselves in having the example of the clergy of the church of England under which to shelter themselves. Nevertheless, men of sense cannot but be aware of the inconveniences to which *written sermons* expose those who make use of them, and therefore Dean Swift, in his letter to a young clergyman, and Dr. Edwards in his *Preacher*, speaking of the accomplishments necessary for all public speakers, observe, that they should be able to deliver themselves unembarrassed by notes ; and that they who have not attained to this, should be so far masters of their subject as readily to take off a sentence with one glance of the eye. For want of this, most of those who read their sermons, fix their eyes on their book like a dull monotonous school-boy, or stand motionless in the pulpit like a speaking statue.*

How

* “ There are several that scandalously confine themselves
“ to their papers, and read them but indifferently neither. A
“ man would be tempted to think that some of them are but

How this reproach is come upon us it is difficult positively to say ; neither can it be easily determined *when*, or *by whom* this custom of substituting *reading* for *preaching* was first introduced. Some have said that the calumnies raised by the papists against bishop Latimer, determined him to write his sermons, that he might have it in his power to refute their slanders, if they attempted to put into his mouth what he never meant to utter.

Mr.

“ then learning to read, or that they had never seen their notes before that time. These men fix their eyes on their *written provision*, as if they were ashamed to look their hearers in the face.” Edwards’s Preacher, vol. I. p. 222. “ Others again,” as Dean Swift remarks, “ have a trick of *popping up* and down every moment from their *paper* to the audience, like “ an *idle school-boy* on a repetition day. ” In this case, Dr. Byrom would ask

“ What is a sermon, good or bad,

“ If a man reads it like a lad ? ”

“ As my sermons,” says Mr. Wakefield in his *Memoirs*, “ were “ usually composed in the week before I preached them (for “ I never borrowed a line from any man whatever) by the “ assistance of a tolerable, tenacious memory, I had seldom “ occasion to look upon the book ; a practice attended with two “ excellent effects, without which preaching can scarcely be “ attended to by any congregation. Your voice is not lost in the “ pulpit, but diffuses itself through the church ; and the audience is impressed with a good opinion of your abilities, which “ is highly serviceable in securing attention, and adding authority to your instruction. I have been told that when my friend “ the bishop of Cork, who is gifted with a very fluent eloquence, “ first entered upon a curacy near Cambridge, the town was

“ over-run

Mr. Newton, in his address to the inhabitants of St. Mary Woolnoth, supposes, that as the custom of the puritans, under the Oliverian usurpation, was to preach *extempore*, or from short notes, the *conforming clergy*, out of pure enmity to the *non-conformists*, ran into the deplorable extreme of almost universally writing their sermons. A dreadful way of manifesting their contempt. It is however certain that the time, when the practice became general, must have been considerably subsequent to the reformation, and that it was not *then* conceived that ministers would deign to have recourse to such an expedient; for we are told, in the *preface* to the *Book of Homilies*, that they were designed for the use of those who “ had not the

“ over-run with methodists. His discernment readily pointed out
 “ the principal cause of the emptiness of the church, whilst the
 “ neighbouring barn teemed with catechumens; namely, the
 “ *hum drum* method of fixing the eye immoveably on the *book*,
 “ where nothing distinguishes the exhibitioner from a *statue of*
 “ *wood or stone*, but the *droning whine*, and the *mumbling lip*.
 “ He adopted instantly the extemporaneous mode of preaching,
 “ and soon transferred the swarm to his own hive. Had I con-
 “ tinued my ministrations in the church, I should have pursued
 “ the same method, as I had made the experiment, in part, with
 “ success, by delivering two discourses on the Lord’s Prayer
 “ from a few lines containing only introductory words of sen-
 “ tences.” I insert this passage, on account of the general
 sentiment it is meant to support, without approving either of the
 spirit of the author, or the motives from which his good friend
 the bishop, is said to have acted.

“ gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people.”* Whereas, upon our present plan, it should have been held forth as the resource of those who had not learned to *write*, or who had no books from which they could meanly transcribe their sermons. Bishop Burnet scarcely ever preached by notes.† And whatever the judicious Hooker thought

* This opinion is considerably strengthened by what is said in Stripe's Life of Archbishop Grindal. In the time of queen Elizabeth he drew up a form or model for conducting the ceremony of penance, for those who were convicted of fornication, adultery, &c. He ordered the penitent to stand in the sheet, in the church, during the whole time of the sermon. In some part of the sermon, the preacher was to advert to the case, and to ask the penitent a number of questions in something like a form, which the archbishop sets down *mutatis mutandis*. And it is added, “ this done, the preacher or minister may briefly speak “ what they think meet for the *time, place* and person; directing, “ in the end, the congregation present to pray to God for the “ penitent, &c. and the rather, if they see any good signs of “ true repentance in the person doing penance.” These circumstances seem to me to prove, not only that the particular sermon, on such an occasion, was delivered *extempore*, and *pro re nata*, but the whole process of the business goes plainly upon this supposition, that *all* sermons were then such, because it was provided, in the same form, that, in case there should not be a preaching minister, the curate should be enjoined to read a homily, and then ask the questions at the end of his homily.

† Bishop Burnet's biographer gives us the following anecdote respecting him. “ In the year 1691, when the sees vacant by the deprivation of the non-juring bishops were filled up, “ bishop “ Williams was appointed to preach one of the consecration ser-
“ mons

thought of the matter, in the early part of his life, there is reason to conclude he became, in the end, an *extempore preacher*. In the account of his life it is said, "his sermons were neither long nor earnest, but uttered with a grave zeal, and an humble voice. His eyes always fixed on one place, to prevent his imagination from wandering; infomuch that he seemed to study as he spake. Studying, not so much for *matter*, which he never *wanted*, as for apt illustrations to inform and teach his unlearned hearers by familiar examples, and then make them better by striking applications." All this was needless, and absolutely impossible, at the time of preaching, if he had his sermon in writing before him. "It was but seldom," Mr. Nelson tells us, "that bishop Bull composed his sermon entire, and committed it to writing. He had only the scheme of his sermon in writing, and having, in the manner above described, secured the substance of it, he did, by custom and

mons at Bow church. But being detained, by some accident, the clerk had twice set the psalm, and still the preacher did not appear; whereupon the archbishop of Canterbury (Tillotson) desired Dr. Burnet, then bishop of Sarum, to supply his place; which he did; and, as the archbishop declared, gave them the best sermon he ever heard him preach. In 1705 he was appointed to preach the thanksgiving sermon before the queen at St. Pauls; and as it was the only discourse he had ever written before-hand, so this was the only time that he was ever at a pause in preaching, which, on that occasion, lasted for above a minute."

"practice,

“ practice, bring himself to a great readiness and “ fluency in expressing himself upon all subjects.” Dr. Clarke preached extempore sometimes, and Dr. Frampton, I have been told, did not so much as take a Bible into the pulpit with him ; and when archbishop Sharp was requested to preach twice in the day, his reply was, “ that he could preach “ twice, but that if he preached twice he must *prate* “ once,” which could not follow, as a necessary consequence, if his sermons were written.

Be this as it may, present custom and example ought to have no weight, where scripture *precept* is *wanting*, and scripture *example* is *opposed*. The Head of the church, I own, has given no express command either in the one way or the other ; but his example, and that of his immediate followers, must be allowed to favour that method of preaching which I would defend ; and when the wretched consequences which have been introduced by the *reading plan*, are brought into the account, the absolute necessity of a reform must evidently appear.

All will allow, who believe their Bibles, that in proportion as the grace of God operates upon the minds of ministers, and in proportion as they feel the constraining influence of that love of Christ, of which the apostle speaks in such rapturous strains, 2 Cor. v. 14. bearing them along, with a sweet violence, in the most trying parts of the ministerial office ; and when they have a proper sense of the value of those souls, for whom Christ died,

died, powerfully impressed upon their hearts, in the same degree will they find their tongue *unloosed*, and made as "the pen of a ready writer." There will be, what we have not a word in the English language sufficiently strong to express, that *παρρησία*,* as the Greeks called it, that *libertas loquendi*, that manly boldness, authority, freedom and perspicuity of speech, which will carry its own evidence along with it, and where it does not savingly *convince* it will be sure to *confound*. 1 Theff. ii. 2. In short, let us fix upon any case, immediately to our purpose, or upon what scripture character we please; let us con-

* It is pleasing to find that our views of important subjects coincide with those of great and good men, whose learning, good sense, and real religion were never disputed; and in handling a point of such delicacy, where I have general practice and confirmed prejudices to oppose, I am happy in seeing myself supported by respectable names, though fully persuaded that I have truth on my side. Bishop Wilkins says, "this liberty (i. e. of *preaching extempore*) will breed a *παρρησία*, such a fitting confidence as should be in that orator who is to have a power over the affections of others, of which such an one is scarce capable, who shall so servilely tie himself to particular words and expressions from which he dares not vary *for fear of being out*." Gift of Preaching, p. 202. "The true orator thinks and feels; and his words flow naturally from him. He does not depend on words, but they on him (says St. Austin). A man that has an active soul, with a natural easiness of speech, improved by practice, needs never fear the want of expressions." Archbishop of Cambray.

See also Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, translated by Gilpin, vol. I. p. 367.

sider

sider Christ on the mountain, or on the great day of the feast, when he “ stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink ;” let us take St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, St. Paul before king Agrippa, or in the midst of Mars Hill, and contrast them with a demure, lifeless being, formally *pressing down* his book upon the *cushion* before him ; and farther add, if we wish to render the figure still more incongruous, other marks of inconsistency, in case of dim or short-sightedness, and then let us inquire how *he* is like *them*, or by what figure of speech such a man can be called a *crier* in God’s cause, a *boanerges*, a son of *thunder* ? *

Undoubtedly, if we look out for those ministers who have been most active and zealous in the cause of God and religion, and most successful in turning men from *sin* to *holiness*, and in enlarging the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, in this and in all other ages, they will be found to be those, whom the world, in *derision*, falsely calls *extempore preachers*. This remark should not be lightly

* I readily allow that the above representation does not universally apply, there being some ministers who by dint of rehearsal, can nearly get off their sermons by heart, and others, prompted by zeal for God, and warmly entering into what they have written, deliver their discourses with life and animation ; but even such, though they may be really pious and valuable men, can only be called *good readers*, or *good actors*, but not *good preachers* with any propriety of language ; and it must likewise be granted that these instances are comparatively rare.

passed

passed over.* Here is a fact, so notorious, that a reference to names, in confirmation of it, is absolutely needless; and therefore, if *extempore preaching*, though very unfashionable, and extremely unpalatable, be that kind of preaching which God, in so particular a manner, is pleased to own, how can any man consider himself as possessed of the qualifications necessary for the discharge of the ministerial office, who is obliged to be beholden to those helps, which God does not direct him to in his holy word, and which good men, upon scripture ground, cannot defend.

But though, as before observed, it may be difficult to determine *whence*, and from whom this practice of *writing sermons* came, unless the causes already alledged should be deemed satisfactory, it is easy to point out the various evils it is calculated to produce, as well as the various mischiefs which have long ago followed thereupon. For in the first place, I am bold to declare that it does encourage, and has, to an awful degree, encouraged and promoted *irreligion* and *contempt of God's word*, both amongst ministers and people. To be an *ambassador of Christ*, a *watchman* to the house of Israel, an

* Such men usually find preaching a delightful employment to them, and if full congregations, crowded communions, and serious attentive hearers are to be allowed as proofs and evidences of respectable ministerial abilities, most or all of these evidences will be met with, where there is a judicious extempore preacher in the church.

overseer over the *flock* of God, and a *steward* of the *mysteries* of Jehovah, implies an importance of engagement into which every thinking man will enter with fear and trembling. For however lightly some may esteem these offices, a sight of their weight and difficulty caused the chief of the apostles to ask, with anxious concern, "who is sufficient for these things?" The salvation and condemnation of men are intimately connected with, and, in a certain sense, suspended upon what we say, whenever we stand up, in the house of God, to speak to the people. The inquiry then should be, not how we shall please ourselves, perform our task, and gain the applause of our hearers; but how we shall deliver our own souls? How we shall speak so as to be "clear from the blood of all men," so as to "save ourselves, and them that hear us," and by "manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God?" Under these convictions, a man cannot be satisfied with having a discourse *ready written*, which he hopes, upon the whole, *will do*.* On the contrary, he will inquire how Christ and his apostles preached? How the primitive christians preached? How the

* An extempore preacher, it is granted, may reason in the same manner, but such an horrid profanation of the pulpit is not so common with that class of men. Extempore preaching has a direct tendency to call forth the powers of the soul into action, and when this is done there can be no need of *patching* up a miserable *make-shift* sermon.

greatest

greatest men in all ages have preached? and how he himself shall preach so as to "open sinners' eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and finally obtain an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus?" Acts xxvi. 17, 18. For want of this due sense of the seriousness of the ministerial charge, do not young men often rush into holy orders without having so much as a *written sermon* of their own by them?* In this extremity, do they not run to a bookseller's shop, or apply to some clerical friend, whose hand they can readily read, and in this manner, as they think, discharge their duty towards God and souls? Indeed, I am afraid, the indirect methods made use of, in procuring our discourses, † are so various, that many of
us,

* Upon inquiring, some time ago, how a young minister had acquitted himself in his first pulpit essay, who had been ordained a few days before, I received the following answer from one of the company. "He did very well, but I know who inspired him." Perhaps not, for as matters now go, possibly somebody else inspired even *his inspirer*.

† "I have seen," says Mr. Jesse, "bundles of manuscript sermons in a bookseller's shop, which he told me he got when he purchased the books of deceased clergymen, and that he sold them to the younger clergy. In this way sermons may be handed down from generation to generation, as are arguments or syllogisms for disputations in the schools at Oxford." It is painful to expose these blemishes, but the facts
are

us, when we go into the pulpit, may frequently say of our sermon, as the poor man did of his hatchet, "Alas, master, for it was borrowed." To this state of *humiliation* we are reduced, by the introduction of written preparations.

Wherever these things are practised, and I fear the instances are not few, one of the most awful and momentous employments, in which any man can possibly engage, is grievously trifled with, the people are wronged and imposed upon, and many of the clergy are satirized, perhaps with a considerable degree of justice.* "No man ought to take the office

are so well known, and this inexcusable abuse of the ministerial function, so much upon the increase, that every attempt at concealment can only tend to blacken the offence, and aggravate its enormity.

..... "pudet hæc opprobria nobis,

"Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli." Ovid.

* Cowper, in his poems, after describing the character of the minister of Christ, in the person of St. Paul, adds,

"Behold the picture ! Is it like ? Like whom ?

"The *things* that mount the rostrum with a *skip*

"And then *skip* down again ; pronounce a text,

"Cry hem, and reading what *they never wrote*,

"Just *fifteen minutes*, huddle up their work,

"And with a *well-bred whisper* close the *scene*."

Vol. II. p. 66.

Many of my remarks will, I am persuaded, appear severe, and glad should I be did not a strict regard to truth and faithfulness forbid my being more gentle : however, I comfort myself with this hope, that the severest parts, in this publication, will be found in the quotations from different authors.

" of

“ of a minister unto himself, but he that is
 “ called to it of God as was Aaron.” Heb. v. 4.
 And our church has fixed, what one might reasonably expect would prove, a sufficient barrier in the way of those who are not influenced by right motives. “ Do you believe,” says the bishop to each candidate for holy orders, “ that you are inwardly
 “ moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this
 “ office and ministration ?” If men do not feel themselves thus “ inwardly moved ;” if they thus begin wrong, and as one of our bishops says, “ lie to the Holy Ghost” in the very outset ; if they undertake the work of the ministry simply as a trade, and make the answer, required at ordination, a mere matter of form, having no other end in wishing to be “ put into the priest’s office but that they may eat a piece of bread,” 1 Sam. ii. 36. (i. e.) secure a good living, and spend their days in ease and idleness, what is undertaken as a trade will be executed as a task ; the prosperity of religion and welfare of the souls of the people will constitute the least part of their concern. So long as men’s views of the office are dissingenuous, carnal and worldly, their manner of performing it will be flat, irreverend and trifling. They will not appear to regard what their sermons are, so that they fill up the allotted space, now dwindled to a poor ten or fifteen minutes, indifferent whether they produce any saving effect upon their hearers or not. And there is no need of one rising from the dead to tell

us that a careless profane minister, will mostly have a careless and profane people; neither can we wonder if, from a view of the conduct of such persons, men are tempted to conclude that religion is a mere piece of priestcraft, a "cunningly devised fable." Had the custom of reading sermons never obtained so far in this kingdom, and were preaching the word of God, as it ought, made an essentially necessary part of the minister's duty, the law, physic, or the army would have the preference in the esteem of those, whose temper of mind renders them totally unfit for the pastoral office, and suitable persons would be appointed thereto. But as things now are there is no check upon men's thoughtlessness. A flock of sermons leaves them at liberty to ramble as they please, till Saturday night, or Sunday morning sends them to their hoard of manuscripts, and calls them to hurry over their weekly task. Here is the grand source of irreligion in the land! And it is chiefly on this account that hearing and reading the scriptures, all the ordinances of divine worship, and every part of practical and experimental religion is so universally neglected.*

* That extempore preaching is incapable of abuse, or that the practice of it is not, in many cases, greatly abused, I mean not to affirm; but that the same cause of complaint is found either amongst those few of our own church who follow that method of preaching, amongst the orthodox dissenters in this nation, or amongst protestants abroad, I absolutely deny, and let them prove it who can.

This

This practice, of reading sermons, fosters *ignorance*, and ignorance of those things which it most concerns a minister of Christ to be acquainted with. For every other department of life a suitable education and proper qualifications are required; and certainly, did we set God before our eyes, and act with a serious view to the strict account we must give to him of our diligence in attending to, or neglect of the flock of Christ, in that day "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear," we should not wantonly take upon ourselves such an awful charge, without first inquiring whether or not we are duly qualified for its execution, and whether we mean to be truly faithful therein. Before he enters into the ministry, a man should closely, and conscientiously study the nature of the office. He certainly ought not ever to think of engaging in the work, before he has a fund of divinity in his head, and the power of religion in his heart. He is to be like the "householder, bringing out of his treasure things new and old." This, however, he is never likely to do, unless divinity has been his chief study, for years before he takes the ministerial office upon him, and unless he has first made his memory and breast a storehouse of divine truth. He should be an Apollos, "mighty in the scriptures;" and when he has obtained a comprehensive view of the doctrines of the gospel, and sacred subjects are become familiar unto him, he will then, and not till then, be able to speak profitably to the people without the *adscititious*

aids of a *written remembrancer*. He will then prove "a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," and "giving to all their portion of *spiritual* meat in due season;" and by these means he will conciliate the confidence, the love and esteem of his hearers. It will also be well for the minister of Christ, to be fully acquainted with the best commentators on the sacred scriptures, and most judicious writers on the various points of doctrinal and experimental religion. But in order to render this acquaintance, with different authors, truly advantageous, he must, by study and close application, make their thoughts his own, and learn to deliver them in his own words. One of the greatest divines that ever England knew, than whom few ever acquired a greater facility in speaking, or had an audience more under command, declared that he read over Matthew Henry's Commentary on the New Testament upon his knees. Were all young divines to tread in his steps, they would not be at a loss for something to say on a text of scripture; they would be duly qualified for the work of the ministry. But they who intend to be *readers* of sermons, go a shorter way to work. Instead of using all this care and diligence to prepare for the sacred office, they are chiefly concerned to know how they shall decently pass their examination before the bishop; though this concern seldom operates soon enough to enable them to do any thing to purpose; and it is well known that young
men

men are often employed, previous to their applying for ordination, in getting acquainted with those things, which a boy ought to know, who stands up to say his catechism. Nor is this at all strange, for if a life of ease and pleasure is a man's chief object, in entering into the ministry, it will be enough for him if he can, in any way, just squeeze into orders. It is true he may meet with a slight reprimand from the bishop or examining chaplain, and I am happy to learn, that these evils are more carefully guarded against than they formerly were, though the rebukes which candidates receive, on such occasions, are soon forgotten, and often serve to administer matter of merriment to themselves and companions when the trial is over; and they know that written preparations will be a sufficient cloak for their ignorance in future. They can transcribe or purchase as learned sermons as any of their brethren, and happy for them, *common practice* sanctions the expedient; and they have also the satisfaction to observe that the common people, in many places, still look upon learning and piety as inseparable from a gown and cassock.*

Men, who have a due regard for the interest of religion, have long been sensible of the spread and issue of this evil; and therefore bishop Burnet, in the

* This is far from being so general as it hath been. The defect begins to discover itself, and the consequences are—such as may be expected to arise from a detection so disgraceful (i. e.) the desertion of our churches.

preface to his Pastoral Care, p. 25. bitterly complained that "Ember weeks were the burden and grief of his life, because the much greater part of those who came to be ordained, were *ignorant* to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. They cry," says he, "and esteem it a sad disgrace to be denied orders, though the ignorance of some is such, that in a well-regulated state of things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament." "The case," adds he, "is not much better in many, who having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the scriptures or any one good book since they were ordained; so that the small measure of knowledge, upon which they got into holy orders, not being improved, is in the way to be lost; and then they think it a great hardship if they are told they must know the scriptures, and the body of divinity better before they can be trusted with the care of souls. These things pierce one's soul, and make him often cry out, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.' What are we like to grow to?"* Never can I forget the serious manner in which the present worthy bishop of

* The whole of the paragraph is well worthy of perusal, but I forbear to transcribe it, hoping those whom it may concern will read for themselves.

Worcester addressed himself to the candidates, upon this head, when I was ordained priest. His warnings and exhortations were such as well became a governor of the church, and were truly expressive of that anxious concern, which every godly prelate must feel when sending forth persons to undertake the pastoral office.* Cowper also deprecates the evils consequent upon the introduction of the awful characters, above described, into the church, in the following moving strains.

“ From such apostles, oh ye mitred heads !

“ Preserve the church ! And lay not careless hands

“ On *sculls* that *cannot* teach, and *will not* learn.”

Vol. II. p. 6.

Would to God something might be done to prevent the farther spread of the evil.

And as written sermons have a tendency to foster *ignorance*, so are they also calculated to promote *idleness*.† The command of the apostle to Timothy

* I almost blush to own that I once met with a poor wretch, who had been ordained by the same worthy prelate, possessing so much infidelity and thoughtlessness as to sport with his godly admonitions. “ He gave us,” said Mr. N.—, “ much good advice, which few of us, I believe, regarded afterwards.”

† Since I wrote the above, I have observed that the same objection was started by bishop Burnet eighty years ago. He says, “ people, who are too apt to censure the clergy, are easily “ carried into an *obvious* reflection on *reading*, that it is an effect “ of *laziness*.” Pastoral Care, p. 206. The *laziness*, I presume, which the good bishop has an eye to, is that which prompts men

thy is, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly
 "to them that thy profiting may appear to all."
 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God." *
 Writing, according to the maxims of the ancient druids,
 as noticed in Cæsar's Commentaries, lib. IV.

to get a stock of written sermons, so that they may be for years
 without composing one discourse, or that which is manifest in a
cold, languid delivery.

* M. de la Flechere, in his Portrait of St. Paul, vol. I.
 p. 358. first edit. after collecting together most of St. Paul's
 earnest and affectionate addresses to his son Timothy, adds, that
 "if it had ever entered into the mind of the apostle that it would
 "be proper for pastors to compose their sermons, in the manner
 "of rhetoricians, and to deliver them, as public orators, he
 "would most probably have given some intimation of this to his
 "disciple. In such a case he would have held out to his pupil in
 "divinity some instructions of the following nature. 'O Timo-
 "thy, my son! I have frequently commanded thee to labour in
 "the work of the Lord, after my example. But as thou art not
 "an apostle, properly so called, and hast not received the gift of
 "languages, I advise thee to write over thy sermons as correctly
 "as possible. And after this, do not fail to rehearse them before
 "a mirror, till thou art able to repeat them with freedom and
 "grace; so that when thou art called upon public duty, thou
 "mayest effectually secure the approbation of thy auditors.
 "Furthermore when thou art about to visit any distant churches,
 "lay up in thy portmanteau the choicest of thy sermons. And
 "wherever thou art, take care to have, at least, one discourse
 "about thee, that thou mayest be prepared against any sudden
 "emergency, and never appear unfurnished in the eyes of the
 "people." The idea of such a passage in the epistles of St. Paul
 is too absurd to be borne with. Nevertheless, to give consistency
 to present practice, this, and still greater absurdities must be
 admitted.

cap.

cap. xiii. is injurious to the memory, and prevents a readiness of speaking on those topics, with which we may, in a good degree, be acquainted. The man who would speak with ease and freedom, must ruminate upon, carefully and judiciously digest his subject; and when his ideas are clear suitable words will seldom be wanting wherewith to express them.* But *writing* sermons takes away the grand incentive to diligent study. Under the influence of mental sloth, men would rather crowd their scrutoires

* " The father of doctor Alexander Monro prevailed upon him, when first entering into business, to read some public lectures in anatomy, and to illustrate them by shewing the anatomical preparations which he had sent from abroad; and, without his knowledge, invited the president and fellows of the college of physicians, and the whole company of surgeons to honour him with their presence at his first day's lecture. This unexpected company threw him into such confusion as to make him entirely forget the words of the discourse he had committed to memory. Having left his papers at home, he was at a loss, for some time, what to do; but having a ready presence of mind, he immediately began to shew some of the anatomical preparations in order to gain some little time for reflection; and very soon resolved not to attempt to repeat the discourse he had written, but to express himself in such words as should occur to him from the subject, which he was confident he understood. The experiment succeeded; he delivered himself well, and gained great applause as a good and ready speaker. After this, being persuaded that words, expressive of his meaning, would always occur in speaking on a subject which he understood, he never, during his whole lifetime, attempted in speaking to repeat the words of any *written* discourse,

toires with *manuscript sermons*, collected together in the most easy and cheap way they can devise, than get their minds stored with a proper fund of divine knowledge, or endeavour to keep alive, in their breasts, such a sense of God and eternal things, as will enable them to speak "a word in season to him that is weary." If a sermon must be prepared, should they not stoop to still meaner contrivances, they mostly prefer the labour of transcribing to the trouble of composing a discourse for themselves; nor need we be surpris'd at this, because, as Cowper observes,

"To follow foolish precedents and wink

"With both our eyes, is easier than to *think*."

In preachers of a truly serious mind *unbelief* has a chief hand in *pinning* them down to this unscriptural habit. They fear they shall be confounded, that they shall want matter,* or fall into an insipid sameness;

"discourse, but spoke from memory (I should say from experience) and expressed himself easily and even elegantly in such words as flowed from the subject." I leave every minister of the gospel to make his own use of this anecdote, faithfully copied from the *Memoirs* of that great man's life, prefixt to his anatomical lectures. See also Earle's account of the life of Pott, in the preface to his works, p. 41.

* *Want matter!* "With what facility," says the author of the *Portrait of St. Paul*, "may suitable expressions be expected to follow those animated sentiments which are inspired by an ardent love to God and man, especially when subjects of such universal concern are agitated as *death* and redemption, judgment

fameness; or else they are apprehensive that their timidity, hesitation, and other natural impediments are too great ever to be conquered. But before we come to these hasty, dishonourable, and dastardly conclusions, we certainly should give the matter a fair trial, and at least take as much pains to become useful speakers, in the church of God, as Demosthenes did to master those difficulties which nature and habit had thrown in his way. It is observed by Peter Martyr, that "God gives these gifts by little and little, we applying our own diligence and endeavours." "And this," adds he farther, "must be taken heed of, that a man being lawfully called to preach the gospel (so he sufficiently understand those things that be necessary) he should not stop back from the office, although he perceive himself, after a sort, destitute of these arts, (eloquence, &c.) but shall rather strengthen and confirm his mind with that sentence of God to Moses, 'Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb or the deaf, or the seeing or the blind; have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.'" *Exod. iv. 12.* See Martyr's Common Place-Book, part IV. p. 27.

"ment and eternity? Upon such occasions, out of the abundance of the heart will the mouth speak. 'Nor will the preacher be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths which God has communicated to him while meditating upon *his text*.'" *Act. Synod, chap. xl.*

I should

I should really be happy to hear every minister, who is an advocate for *written discourses*, preach a sermon upon the above words of the Lord to Moses. The gift of tongues was no part of the Lord's promise to him. This was needless, as he was already "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and probably spake their language as fluently as Hebrew, if not more so, having been brought up in Pharaoh's court. God did not therefore engage to work a miracle, but to enable Moses to get the better of his constitutional timidity, and to give him all the readiness and boldness which was necessary for the delivery of the message wherewith he was entrusted: of course Martyr's application of the text is just, and the use I attempt to make of it *fair* and *natural*. It was the opinion of the archbishop of Cambray that "none should "be chosen for pastors, who have not the gift of "preaching;" and had that *ecclesiastical law*, founded on the Levitical œconomy, in which it is provided that no person who is either *mutilus* or *mancus* shall be admitted to the exercise of any sacred offices, been also extended to those who, in a certain sense, may be said to be *dumb*,* and were it now put in force, the church would derive much benefit therefrom; but still I would have every laborious faithful minister screened from the operation of this law, though he cannot lay aside the use of written sermons.

* Isa. lvi. 10.

Our manner, in the extempore way, may not please us, as was the case with Moses; and the matter may not be such as we would wish for, but if both the one and the other come from God, and if our sermons are the genuine fruits of our own labour and study, the great end of preaching will be answered. Let us go forth, by prayer and meditation, to meet our God, and he will not fail to "put a parable into our mouth." Men may talk of wanting parts, for preaching *extempore*, but the truth is, they rather want ministerial fortitude, and more faith in God, who "perfects praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," and who can cause "the tongue of the stammerer to speak plainly." If the son of Cræsus, who had never uttered a word till that moment when he saw the sword up-lifted to slay his father, prompted by filial affection, and alarmed for the life of his parent, at that instant conquered *physical impossibilities*, broke his long silence and loudly exclaimed, "soldier, do not kill the king!" what will not a man feel himself impelled to say when reasoning with sinners on the brink of ruin, and endeavouring to pluck them as "brands from everlasting burnings?" * *Written sermons*, cloud these

* From the example of Cicero, we also may see what a man will do who is full of his subject. He was well acquainted with the traitorous practices of Cataline, both against the state, and against his own person; and therefore, when he saw the fraudulent wretch come into the senate house, intending to amuse the con-
script

these divine views, are highly inimical to all promptitude of invention, miserably curb the impetus of zeal, and the free powers of recollection. Whilst they are in the delivery, the soul, which should, at that time especially, be all life and fire, has its noble wings clipt, finds itself confined, as it were, in a paper prison, is entangled like a bird in a snare, or sits squat and motionless "like a pagod in a niche."* And even if it could be proved, which I own is matter of doubt with me, that there is the greatest, and most profitable variety in *written* sermons, I should be inclined to say in reply, that in well-managed *extempore preaching*, where men are devoted to God in heart and life, truly feeling what they say, old things appear new, and are rendered valuable and interesting by the circumstances attending their delivery.†

script fathers by his fair, beguiling speeches, till his horrid schemes were ripe for execution, either dreading the consequences of his appearance there, or else roused with just indignation against the vile parricide, "he delivered an eloquent, *extempore* speech, highly beneficial to his country, which he afterwards published." "Tum M. Tullius consul, five presentiam ejus timens, five ira commotus, orationem habuit luculentam, atque utilem reipublicæ, quam postea scriptam edidit." Salust. A good patriot is always prepared to speak for the good of his country, and a good preacher is ever ready to speak for the good of souls and the glory of his Lord and Master.

* Epistle against Indolence.

† "There is an authority in the simplest things that can be said, when they carry visible marks of genuineness in them." Bishop Burnet's Past. Care, p. 212.

This

This observation is confirmed by the example of a great minister of the present day. He is by no means remarkable for the variety of his subjects, and yet his popularity has kept up for more than forty years, and his people would rather hear him than any other preacher in the world. And every clergyman who can come to this point, to cast himself upon the Lord, in the proper use of means, will find God will direct him to such matter as will be useful to the people, which is the grand object we are ever to have in view.

A want of this desirable temper of mind, this singleness of eye, this entire surrender of themselves to God, in the work of the ministry, is but too evident in many of the more serious sort of young men who have lately entered into holy orders. They have got into a flippant, fribbling, *gentlemanny way*, as the Scotch presbyterian named it, of preaching the great truths of the gospel, which, however calculated to furnish their hearers with superficial views of the doctrines of scripture, and to produce a kind of *skin-deep* religion, it by no means promises to turn men from the world and sin to God and holiness, to beget and maintain in them "that
" faith which is the first principle of that commu-
" nion between the believer's soul and the divine
" spirit on which the whole of our spiritual life
" depends,"* or to make men truly "wise unto

* Bishop Horsley's Charge.

"salvation."

“salvation.” When young ministers handle the essential doctrines of christianity as if they were afraid of burning their fingers, or rather “lest they should suffer reproach or persecution for the cross of Christ,” apparently saying every thing, but in effect saying nothing to the purpose; when their aim is, by gentle touches and fine language, to render the gospel palatable to the carnal mind, instead of acting as men who know not but they may be called to give an account to God of the manner in which they acquit themselves in the delivery of their present message to the people, they are, in reality, *men-pleasers*, and therefore cannot be “the servants of Christ.” Accommodation, in ministers, is seldom useful, always dangerous, and not unfrequently fatal. It requires the grace of an apostle *innocently* to “become all things to all men;” and not a few, who have attempted it, have, in the hazardous trial, lost all true favour of religion, and degenerated into downright formality, if not into something worse. Written sermons are extremely convenient for men of their stamp. They can pare, correct and polish, till truth is deprived of its edge;* but it should never be forgotten, that if a
man

* I think it unworthy of the minister to waste his time in his closet in smoothing of periods, giving gentle touches to his descriptions, &c. When one falls into this method and employment of these *pretty* preachers he can have no time to do any thing else. What could we think of a preacher who should in
the

man must either offend or deceive, it is certainly safest to offend, in the present case. Offences will come where the truth is faithfully preached, but if a man adorns in his life what he delivers from the pulpit, these offences will die away; and even they who cannot be brought to see things as he does, or cordially and savingly to embrace the truth, will at least give him credit for the purity of his intentions, whilst the ministerial *sneak* will be *despised* by all thinking persons.

Could we be persuaded to weigh the matter fairly, we must see that *written sermons* not only serve as a convenient resource for the clerical trimmer, but are really calculated to feed man's natural pride, and are adopted by many either with a view to conceal real, and perhaps criminal deficiency, or else to gain credit for those abilities they never possessed, and those acquirements they never were careful to obtain; or finally to display a *foolish*, elegant turn, which does more harm than good in a sermon. If every discourse must, of necessity, appear an effort of genius; if we are always to find it a standard of neat composition; if the force of preaching depends on the smoothness of our sentences, and the success of our public addresses on the roundness of our periods, the point I contend for might admit of

the most affected *jingle* of words shew sinners the *divine judgments* hanging over their heads, and hell opening under their feet? Archbishop of Cambray. This is even worse than the thief *Pedius* replying to the charge of robbery in *nicely balanced antitheses*. Perius.

F

some

some doubt. But this cannot be allowed. The apostle Paul did not "come to the Corinthians" either with excellency of speech, or with those "enticing words which man's wisdom teacheth;" but acted as a man who had steadily "determined not to know any thing amongst them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The great purpose of human learning is to enable a minister to descend to the capacities of the common people, and to acquire, what it is no easy matter to attain, a sublime familiarity of language; and this, I presume, is best accomplished without the wretched cumber of a book. But few are content thus to *become fools for Christ's sake*. Some suppose themselves formed to shine as fine writers,* but not as ready speakers.

* "We must not," as Dr. Edwards observes in his Preacher, p. 248. "have a fond ambition to abound in polished sentences, and regular expressions. Affectation of eloquence is one of the worst things in a clergyman." Bishop Wilkins maintains that "the greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainness, and that it will not become the majesty of a divine embassy to be *garnished* out with *flaunting affected* eloquence." "How unsuitable is it for a hungry soul, who comes unto this ordinance with a desire of spiritual comfort and instruction, and there to hear only a *starched* speech, full of puerile, worded rhetoric." He likewise adds that "it is a sign of low thoughts and designs when a man's study is about the polishing of his phrases and words;" and then he concludes with a severe censure on the conduct of such men in the following Latin sentence from Seneca. "Cujusque orationem vides *politam & felicitam*, scito *animum in pusillis occupatum*." It is said in the life of Dr. Manton, that
being

speakers. Their attempts in the extempore way, have not succeeded according to their wishes. They have been bantered by the world, and reasoned with by mistaken friends; an unhallowed shame, arising from a consciousness of visible embarrassment, at length prevents perseverance. Dissatisfied with the proper use and improvement of those abilities "which it hath pleased God to bestow upon them," and unwilling to appear in their own proper character, as public speakers, they assume a new character, become

being one day to preach before the mayor and corporation of the city of London, he judged it necessary to prepare a very learned discourse for so respectable an audience; but when he was coming out of St. Paul's, a poor man met him and thus accosted him; "Your servant sir, I came to hear you to day, expecting to get some food for my soul, but I was disappointed, you were quite too high for me." "Friend," said the doctor, "if I have not preached to you to-day, you have preached to me, and depend upon it I will never make myself such a fool any more." But what shall we say then of two young divines, whom I could name, who used to search every magazine and monthly publication they could lay hold of, in order to cull from thence all the *elegant sentences* and *pretty turns of expression* they could there meet with; no doubt with the laudable design of looking out decorations wherewith to *bedizen* their public discourses. One of this *par nobile fratrum* had the vanity to say "he hoped to become as fine a writer as any in the kingdom." Certainly they would have spent their time much better, and in a manner much more becoming the servants of God, had they studied the scriptures together, instead of contriving how they should *disgrace* the pulpit, and bewilder the people by decking their sermons in the *tautology* and meretricious garb of spruce composition,

become a kind of *non-descripts*, or some thing like what chymists would call a *tertium quid*, by availing themselves of that fashionable expedient, which they have learnt from men, and not from God. From that time they commence, what we may name, *reading preachers*, and ever after ascend the pulpit with an air of self-confidence, relying on their notes instead of their God, unaccountably praying that he would *further them with his continued help*, when they can scarcely be said have left any room for him to help them, having put themselves into a situation for doing either *with* or *without* divine assistance.* *Prayer*, and *sermon*, and *all*

composition. Such persons seem to be got into the same predicament as the poor unsuccessful son of the Brush, who convinced that he had not done justice to the celebrated features of the renowned Helen, endeavoured to supply the visible deficiency by clothing her in very rich drapery, and therefore received the following severe rebuke from his offended master. "I see, young man, that not being able to paint her *beautiful*, you have made her *fine*." Truth, without doubt, has native charms; but then they are such as are *obscured* rather than heightened by terse language, and the foolish flourishes of oratory. Ministers who run into this extreme cannot well be said simply to *preach Christ crucified*, they rather dishonour him, and represent him as a *mock king*, by dressing him in a *scarlet robe*. It would be well for the feeble imitators of Mr. Hervey to remember, that he did not preach in the style in which he wrote, and that nothing could be more familiar and simple than his pulpit addresses were, especially towards the latter part of his life.

* They may not, nay I am sure they do not think so, but this is the light in which the matter strikes me.

is *written* with some, and we need not be surpris'd if, at length, they scruple to say *yes* or *no without a book*.*

That the above distinction is not more severe than just, and that prejudice alone can give it the air of novelty, will appear from the following quotation from Walton's life of bishop Sanderfon. "His sermons" says honest Isaac, "as Dr. King, the then bishop of Chichester called him, were the *less* valuable, because he *read* them, which he was forced to do; for though he had an extraordinary memory (even the art of it) yet he had such an invincible fear and bashfulness, that his memory (I wish it were called quickness of invention) was wholly useless, as to the repetitions of his sermons, as he wrote them, which gave occasion to say, when they were first printed and expos'd to censure, (which was in the year 1632) that the best sermons that were ever *read* were never *preached*.† A certain clergyman, whom I highly esteem,

* In this last paragraph there is an allusion to two particular instances, which came under my own observation; and the circumstances attending them were so mortifying as to give perhaps too great a degree of asperity to the preceding remarks; but I hope no truly conscientious, laborious minister, who finds his diffidence insuperable, and who is willing to preach the word as he can, though he cannot do it as he would, will apply what I have said to himself, as to grieve such a man is farthest from my thoughts.

† "In point of sermons, 'tis confess
"Our English clergy make the best:

esteem, has endeavoured to destroy this distinction, by asserting that *reading* is *preaching*; but I hope he succeeded better in his attacks upon bigotry, and his censures of intemperate zeal, than in this part of his well-meant design. Cursory observations, and a few verbal criticisms will not be found sufficiently satisfactory.*

Doubtless

“ But this appears, we must confess,
 “ Not from the *pulpit* but the *press*;
 “ They manage with disjointed skill
 “ The matter well, the manner ill;
 “ And, what seems paradox at first,
 “ They make the *best* and preach the *worst*.

Dr. Byrom.

“ If reading over a variety of approved sermons, as is generally supposed, were really preaching the gospel, we need only look out for some *school-boy* of tolerable capacity, and after instructing him to read over, with proper emphasis and gesture, the sermons of *Tillotson*, *Sherlock*, and *Saurin*, we shall make him an excellent minister of the word of God. But if preaching the gospel be to publish amongst sinners that repentance and salvation which we have experienced in ourselves; if it be to imitate a penitent slave, who, freed from misery and irons, returns to the companions of his former slavery, declaring the generosity of their prince, and persuading them to sue for mercy—if this be to publish the gospel of peace, then it is evident that experience and sympathy are more necessary to the due performance of the work, than all the accuracy and elegance that can possibly be acquired.” Fletcher’s Portrait of St. Paul.

* The anonymous prefacer of bishop Andrews’ Lectures on Genesis has tried to establish the same opinion; but as he chiefly deals in gratuitous assertions, and as the writers, for the most part borrowed from the fifth chapter of Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity,

Doubtless seasons of embarrassment, in the pulpit, are humbling to human pride; but then they are, for the most part, profitable seasons to the faithful minister; they serve to shew us what we are; *that the excellency of the power is of God*, and that unless our *lips are touched with a living coal from the altar*, we can neither speak with comfort to ourselves nor profit to others. This conviction will
bring

Polity, which he refers to, have evidently used the term *preach* or *preaching* in an accommodated sense, what he says does not require a serious answer. And from the cautious manner in which both he and Hooker endeavour to excuse for written discourses, it must appear that they had the concurrent testimony of opinion and practice against them. To censure extempore sermons as things that "die in the birth," or "vanish, as mere words, into the soft air," savours more of *flirt* and *wit*, than sound reasoning, and is more likely to raise a *smile* than beget *conviction* in the considerate breast. If God cannot raise up able men in every age of the church, and if Christ has not engaged to provide a succession of faithful labourers in his vineyard; or if the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit cannot assist a man, in the exercise of proper means, to make as good a sermon one day as he does another; or if a man can be proved absolutely incapable of preaching the same sermon over, or the substance of it, twice, or even a hundred times, should it be found necessary, with equal freedom, fervour and judgment, though he has it not in manuscript by him, then it would be expedient for all sermons to be committed to writing; but if nothing of this can be maintained, why then the *witticisms* of our prefacer must "vanish into the soft air." The fact is, a good sermon cannot "die in the birth." It will be inscribed, in one way or other, upon the hearts of the hearers, and, in a greater or less degree, will accomplish the end for which it is delivered. Hooker says that

bring us to our knees before God. We shall pray for an enlightened understanding, an enlarged heart, and "that utterance may be given unto us, freely to declare the mysteries of the gospel." It would be well also, at such times, to inquire what may have been the cause of our embarrassment. A persuasion that we sufficiently understand our subject often prevents our studying it properly, which indicates both pride and indolence. Sometimes an improper choice of a text, an un sanctified desire to please, or an idolatrous fear of offending man may occasion our perplexity; but whatever may have been

"reading the word of God, and repeating homilies is preaching," and I admit that, in a certain sense, it is so; and thus "the heavens" may be said to preach, for they "declare the glory of God;" but except it can be shewn that what is *reading* in one, is *preaching* in another, either the propriety and general tenor of my argument must be allowed, or Hooker has brought himself into an awkward dilemma; for he says that "the recital of homilies was a third kind of *reading* in former times, a most commendable institution, as well then to supply the casual, as now the necessary defect of sermons." It is proper to observe that Hooker had to do with men who laid too much stress upon sermons, according to the then state of things, and therefore his accommodated use of the word *preaching* was just; but the conclusions drawn from thence by the prefacer of the Lectures are unjust and groundless. For if being able to read a written sermon be sufficient to constitute a preacher, why should such a character as a "non-preaching minister" be ever supposed to exist? Why are such spoken of in Ecclesiastical Law, or why does our church can. 57. distinguish betwixt a minister "who is no preacher," and one who is, between one who *has*, and one "who has not the ability to preach?" Either these men could not *write*, or what is esteemed preaching *now*, was not thought to be so a hundred and ninety years ago.

our

our snare we shall see the propriety of guarding against it in future. But the *reader* of sermons goes a different way to work ; for *he* flies from *divine* to *human* aids, and has recourse to his *writing desk* instead of his *closet*. I again solemnly declare that I mean to pass no censure on the laborious minister, who acts from conscience, and who finds he cannot, or that he dares not venture upon the extempore method of preaching ; but there are those, whose case is justly described in the preceding part of this paragraph. Men who have given up the practice of preaching in the scriptural way themselves, and who also endeavour to prevail on others to follow their example ; a kind of behaviour this which appears to me highly reprehensible ; and upon examination, I doubt, the *motives* of such will be found equally as indefensible as their conduct.

Zeal for God, and the good of men should be the most prominent feature in the character of the christian minister. The preacher is not only to “ seek out acceptable words,” but he should also deliver them in a becoming, animated manner. His delivery is not to be frigid, careless and lifeless, but lively, fervent and powerful, knowing, as says Mr. Herbert, that “ ministers procure attention by *earnestness* of *speech*, it being natural for “ men to suppose that where there is much *earnestness* there is something worth hearing.” But if the matter of the sermon be not near our heart, which we have little reason to expect when the discourse

discourse has been written a week, a month or perhaps years before, we are not to look for much warmth and fervour in the delivery.* When Virgil has charged his piece with all the heightening of poetic fiction, and has collected together every image and circumstance of valour, rage, violence, horror and despair, he accounts for the whole by informing us that the importance of the matter in debate was a sufficient justification of the heat and fury of the contest.

..... "Nec enim levia, aut ludicra petuntur
"Præmia; sed Turni de vita & sanguine certant."

But what is all this when compared with those weighty and momentous objects which are ever before the eyes of the true minister of Christ! Endless, unspeakable bliss, and ceaseless, unutterable woe are considerations of infinitely greater concernment. Either the one or the other of those widely differing states awaits every individual hearer before him. Christ proved himself willing and earnest to save, and satan is ever zealous and active to destroy: "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we are "to strive to persuade men, and affectionately to beseech them, as in Christ's stead, to be reconciled "to God." We are to "set life and death, bless-

* "A man cannot ordinarily be so much affected himself, and consequently he cannot so easily affect others, with things that he speaks by *rote*, as when he takes some liberty to prosecute a matter according to his more *immediate* apprehension of it."

Bishop Wilkins' Gift of Preaching, p. 202.

sing

sing and cursing before them," remembering that God hath solemnly declared "if the wicked are not "faithfully warned, and through our neglect die in "their sins, their blood will be required at our "hands."* If a man can be truly persuaded that God is in earnest when he says this, will he stand upon form and ceremony in the discharge of his duty? Will he be content to *purr* over a ready written, worn out tale, or patiently submit to the unnatural, unscriptural restraint of a *written preparation*? Will he not rather be inclined, after the example of Ezekiel, to "smite with his hand and stamp with his foot,"† when he sees iniquity abounding, and men led captive by satan, the world and sin, regardless of the events of that day, in which they "must appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body?" He will see it needful to "cry aloud, and lift up his voice like a trumpet," Isa. lviii. 1. "The zeal of the Lord's house will eat him up," and every

* St. Chrysostom assures us, that "they who have been intrusted with the ministry of the word, shall be examined most strictly and severely in the next world, whether they have not through sloth or envy neglected to speak any thing which they ought to have spoken; and whether they have demonstrated by their works and labour that they have delivered all things faithfully and concealed nothing that might have been profitable to the people." Hom. I. tom. V. p. 9.

† The author of this pamphlet by no means wishes to recommend either *violent* action, or indecent *barwling*.

thing

thing that prevents his ready access to the hearts and consciences of men will be cast away with just indignation. Any thing short of, or contrary to this in a minister, richly merits the sarcasm contained in the answer of the *comedian* to the bishop, who being asked why people were frequently so much affected in the play-house, where fiction alone is represented, and so insensible and regardless in the church, where the realities of religion and eternity are laid before them, made the following, cutting reply; “ we *players*, represent *feigned* things as though they were *real*, and you *preachers*, treat *real* things as if they were *feigned*.”* This will ever be more or less the case, where *reading* is mistaken for *preaching*, and men speak from their *book* instead of their *heart*.†

Reading sermons, has also been one of the great, and indeed chief reasons why pulpit exercises are so generally disregarded. When sermons are *read*, you do not know whether a man is delivering the fruit of his own labours, or that of others; whether he appears in his own dress, or whether he is strutting about, like the daw, in *borrowed plumes*.‡ And the

general

* “ Marce Callidi, nisi fingeres sic ageres ? ” Cicero would say to such.

† I have before observed that a man may, and that some do read their discourses with life and animation; and to such the sarcasm of the comedian does not belong.

‡ “ Heaven forbid,” says Dr. Cotton Mather, “ that you should be one of those pitiful parsons to whom there has been that
“ advice

general idea that *most* sermons are *meanly copied* from other men's works, lessens people's esteem for *all*.* On this account, I am led to think it would be no more than *fair* and *honest*, and perhaps it would even be the most prudent method, were all those ministers, who do thus make free with the labours of others, to take a printed book with them into the pulpit, after the example of the vicar of W——, or declare openly to the congregation whose discourse they are reading. This would be candid, at least, and however hard the confession may bear upon any pretensions to faithfulness and diligence, in the work of the Lord, it would certainly exhibit some little proof of our integrity.

To this custom of using *written sermons* only, a variety of trifling and profane incidents are imputable, all tending to lower men's esteem for the preaching of God's holy word. For had it never been introduced, should we be told of a minister preaching to poor condemned criminals ("fletum teneatis amici!") upon the proper time of keeping *Christmas*? Should we hear of another being convinced,

"advice given, for the discharge of their pastoral duty, that they
"should use other men's sermons, rather than make any use of
"their own."

* "If once it be suspected that through *incapacity* or *idleness*
"we *steal* what we preach, our people will despise us, and our
"sermons will have little influence if any."

Jesse's *Parochialia*, p. 87.

when

when he had got into the pulpit, that he had stumbled upon an archdeacon's charge, or a sermon preached in commemoration of the great fire in London! This must be highly edifying to a country congregation? Would it have been declared in print, as it really was some years since, and the fact was never denied, that *three* several clergymen, on *three* successive Sundays, delivered the very same discourse, on "fall not out by the way," in the same church, and to the same congregation, not far from one of our universities? Would a late minister of St. C——d's in Sh——y have read a discourse in his church intended to excite his congregation to gratitude for an interval of fine weather whilst, at the very instant of his reading it, the rain descended in torrents from the bursting clouds with a violence sufficient to shew the folly of being *tied to notes*? Would congregations be so frequently dismissed, without an address from the pulpit, with pitiful apologies, when clergymen have forgotten their sermons, or been plundered of them in sport? These facts cannot be denied, and must therefore serve to exhibit so many striking proofs of the ridiculous consequences frequently following upon a servile dependence on written preparations. Such circumstances may, it is allowed, afford matter of laughter to some, but to the man who connects consequences and circumstances together, they furnish matter for melancholy reflection, and deep sorrow of heart,

because

because he sees that "these trifles do, and will produce evils of a very mischievous nature."*

Yet these things, injurious and reproachful as they must appear, are nothing when compared with the ignominy and disgrace, which the insulting proposal of Dr. T——r must have brought upon the clergy of these kingdoms in the esteem of every man of sense; at the bare mentioning of which we might reasonably expect that, under the resistless impulse of just indignation,

..... "Exclamet Malicerta perisse

"Frontem de rebus."†

This shameless and provoking defamer of the whole clerical body, I say, either supposing our young divines too *ignorant to compose*, or too *idle to transcribe* a discourse, kindly engages to supply them with sermons, *printed in imitation of manuscript*, POINTED *properly* as they ought to be read.‡ What a pity

* "Hæ nugæ seria ducent &c." Hor. Ars. Poet. ver. 451. Preaching, I again observe, is solemn work! It is a matter of life and death! and it would be well for those, who feel inclined to trifle with the sacred exercise, to meditate on the words of St. Bernard. "Among the laity *trifles* are *merely* trifles; but in the mouth of a *clergyman* they are BLASPHEMIES." If this sentiment is just in common life, it should have peculiar weight with us in the pulpit.

† "Would not the sea gods with surprize exclaim,

"And think the race of mortals dead to shame?"

Brewster's Persius.

‡ I cannot help laying the opinion of Cowper, on this infamous business, before my readers. He first shews what the true minister of Christ should be, and then very properly asks,

"Are

a pity that *accent* and *emphasis* are not properly marked too! The doctor's customers, however, I am told are very numerous in this, and still more so in a neighbouring kingdom. To these evils we may add those of exchanging sermons, patching and splicing them, and reading pretty, little, moral essays,

- " Are all such teachers? would to heav'n all were!
 " But hark the doctor's voice— fast wedg'd between
 " Two *empirics* he stands, and with swoln cheeks
 " Inspires the news his trumpet. Keener far
 " Than all invective is his bold harangue,
 " While through that public organ of report
 " He hails the clergy, and *defying shame*
 " Announces to the world *his own* and *their's*.
 " He teaches those to read whom schools dismiss'd
 " And colleges untaught; sells *accent*, *tone*
 " And *emphasis* in *score*, and gives to prayer
 " Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
 " He *grinds* divinity of other days
 " Down into modern use; transforms *old print*
 " To *zig-zag manuscript*, and cheats the eyes
 " Of gallery critics by a thousand *arts*.
 " Are there who purchase of the doctor's ware?
 " Oh! ' name it not in Gath; ' it cannot be
 " That grave and learned clerks should need such aid.
 " He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
 " Assuming thus a rank unknown before,
 " *Grand caterer* and *DRY NURSE* of the church."

The doctor's lucky contrivance must be peculiarly acceptable to a clergyman, who some years ago was bitterly complaining of the intolerable toil of transcribing sermons for the pulpit, and desired a gentleman, who happened to be in the church with him, to go into the gallery and see if he could tell whether the paper
 he

essays,* whose chief excellency consists in their extreme brevity, with a text of scripture at the beginning which oft times bears no more relation to the discourse than if it were prefaced with “ now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.”

What is said above, I will not deny, rather concerns the *abuse* than the use of written sermons; but I have endeavoured to prove that reading our public addresses to the people is not that method which the scriptures and primitive practice recommend, and I would further remark that were sermons to be *preached* and not *read* comparatively few of those abuses would have place, and improper persons would not creep into the church prompted by the hope of living a life of thoughtlessness, luxury

he had in his hand was *print* or *manuscript*. Happily, for Mr. Prunello, the gentleman, from profession, knew something of the distant effects of light and shade, and therefore humanely helped the poor distressed parson out of his difficulty, by assuring him, that the deception would be sufficiently completed, if he drew a line, with a pen, between each line in his book; but the doctor's plan, if it do not bear too hard upon the pocket, frees this very worthy, laborious divine from even this piece of otherwise necessary trouble.

* “ How oft when Paul has serv'd us with a text

“ Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preached ? ” Cowper.

The conduct of the clergy, in this matter, is severely censured by bishop Hurd and bishop Horsley in their charges, and by Mr. Knox in his Essays.

and indolence.* They would not have time to dine here and sup there;† to take the lead in *card parties*,‡ *balls and assemblies*, and to run wild after the

* “It is grown a fashionable thing with these gentlemen (some of the clergy) to despise the duties of their parish, to wander about, as the various seasons invite, to every scene of false gaiety, to frequent and shine in all public places, their own pulpits excepted. Or if their age and situation sets them above these puerile amusements, are we not to lament that instead of a manly and rational regard to the welfare of mankind, the chief employment of many a clerical life is to slumber in a *stall*, haunt *levees*, or follow the gainful trade of *election jobbing*?” Dr. Brown’s Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, p. 85.

† The Searcher of hearts knows that I do not mean to “bring railing accusations” against any, that I neither take pleasure in exposing the nakedness of the clergy, nor entertain the most distant wish to provoke them, unless it be to a noble emulation of the apostles and primitive christians in their zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. That a singularity of opinion is not maintained in the above strictures, on the conduct of some ministers, will appear from the cautions, given to the clergy of his day, by St. Jerom, who with great truth says,

“Facile contemnitur clericus, qui sæpe vocatus ad prandium ire non recusat. Nunquam petentes, raro accipimus rogati.”

‡ “Let the bishop, priest or deacon, who spends his time in dice or drinking, either desist or be *deposed*.” Apostolical Can. 35.

“No ecclesiastical person shall at any time, other than for their honest necessities, resort to any taverns, or ale-houses, neither shall they board or lodge in any such places. Furthermore, they shall not give themselves to any base or servile labour, or to drinking or riot, spending their time idly by day or by night, playing at dice, cards, or tables, or any other unlawful games: but at all times convenient they shall hear or read
“somewhat

the diversions of the field,* if not to descend still lower. These irregularities have already brought manifest disgrace upon our order, and the mischief is daily increasing. We frequently hear it urged that ministers "are men of like passions with others;" a position which I feel not the least inclination to controvert, but if it is meant to be inferred from hence that they are not required to be "examples to their flocks," and patterns of true godliness, I am sure St. Paul never intended to countenance such an idea. A gravity of *dress*, without a gravity of deportment is a mere mock distinction. Spiritual mindedness, a serious, devout and contemplative frame should characterize the clergyman, and were all ministers obliged, by example, to go into the pulpit without a *written preparation*, they would then have something else to do; a habit of study would become necessary; they would find it absolutely incumbent upon them to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," or at least it would be needful for them to learn their tale

"somewhat of the holy scriptures, or shall occupy themselves
 "with some other honest study or exercise, always doing the
 "things which shall appertain to honesty, and endeavouring to
 "profit the church of God." Can. 75.

* It is not meet for the ministers of Christ to plaie the part of fouldiers, *huntsmen* and marchauntes, &c. Peter Martyr's Com. Place-book. Book I. p. 18.

"A cassock'd *huntsman*," &c. is a deplorable character in the esteem of Mr. Cowper. See his Poems.

by rote, if they could do no better. But whatever others do, ministers who profess a sincere desire to discharge their duty towards God and man should avoid such temporizing practices, and take care not to countenance, by their example, an unscriptural custom, pregnant with such destructive consequences.

Possibly some may not view the matter in so strong a light; but though much allowance must be made for those who are too far advanced in life to attempt a change, as well as for those whose natural diffidence proves unconquerable, to me, reading sermons, as a general custom, appears shocking to common sense. To hear men talk upon this subject, one might be almost led to suppose that England, since the restoration, were become the Bœotia of Europe, that our heads are as cloudy as our climate, "that souls do not ripen in our northern sky," and that of all the *dull* beings that inhabit this *dull* island the *clergy* are the *dullest*. The counsellor can plead by the hour from his brief of a hand's breadth. The senator can keep up the attention of one of the most august assemblies in the world, whilst he harangues, without a book, for half the night together. The anatomical, and philosophical lecturer can instruct his pupils without the assistance of notes, and it is really astonishing how this demeaning idea could ever possess the human mind, or get forth into the world, that a man must be supposed to be deprived of the faculty
of

of talking sense without a book, the very instant he steps into a pulpit.* Others may reason as they please, but for my part, I shall as soon venture to prefer the reading of the clerk of the house of commons to the smooth flowing language of a Pitt, or the bold eloquence of a Fox, as I shall dare to prefer the man with his sermon on the *cushion*, to the minister with his Bible in his hand.† “Whatever
“ is

* To follow the thought suggested by bishop Wilkins, in his Gift of Prayer, p. 23. I would say, the *christian* who cannot pray *without a form*, the *divine* who cannot *preach without a book*, and the *traveller* who cannot walk *without crutches*, are characters equally absurd and contradictory. The infamous Nero was censured for delivering a speech to the people, upon his accession to the throne, penned by his tutor and friend Seneca. “Adnotabant seniores, quibus otiosum est vetera & presentia contendere, primum ex iis qui rerum potiti essent Neronem *alienæ facundiæ* eguisse.” Tacitus. Alas! how are we fallen! Not one clergyman in a hundred preaches in a scriptural way, nor one in ten uniformly composes his own written sermons. What was once a reproach to a voluptuous emperor is now esteemed no disgrace to persons calling themselves ministers of the gospel.

† It may be said that all have not the abilities of a Fox or a Pitt, and that out of five hundred and fifty members in the house of commons, not more than fifty are tolerable speakers. Superiority of abilities does not immediately concern the present question, but it should be remembered also, that possibly not more than five of these fifty ever gave themselves much trouble to become good speakers, and therefore if they are orators they are made so by nature and not by art; and it is highly probable that had the members of the house of commons been originally designed for that honour, and been educated accordingly, five hundred out of the five hundred and fifty would be tolerable
speakers.

“is read,” in the judgment of Dean Swift, “differs as much from what is repeated without a book, as a copy does from an original.” If neither the intricacies of the law, nor the sagacity of the opposing counsellor can intimidate the learned advocate, or prevent his proceeding in his spirited speech; and if neither the eagle eyes nor the fear of captious replies from adverse parties prevent the delivery of such master pieces of eloquence, in both our houses of parliament, as astonish those who either hear or read them, why should not the divine, who is in no danger of immediate contradiction, be capable of speaking in the same way upon the different topics of religion?

Certainly his not being able, and his not having obtained the habit of doing so must be owing to some very serious defect in the common mode of training up persons for the ministry. It is allowed that many great advantages must accrue from an university education. Oxford and Cam-

speakers. Men who are determined to be orators, and who use the proper means for becoming so, seldom fail in the attempt; witness Demosthenes. Besides, ministers of the church of England, for the most part, are educated with that view; it is supposed to be the object of their choice, and they profess to be *inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take the office and ministry upon them*;* and if men, with such groundless professions, chuse to take an office upon them, without first obtaining the necessary qualifications for the due execution of that office, their temerity and inconsistency cannot invalidate the scope of my argument.

* See p. 39.

bridge are respectable seats of learning, where young men, of a studious cast, may acquire an accurate acquaintance with the learned languages, the liberal arts and sciences, with other valuable accomplishments; but were a proper knowledge in divinity, and a habit of speaking upon the different doctrines and duties of religion made more an object of pursuit by all who are designed for the church, they would come out thoroughly furnished for their work, and would be an honour to their profession.* But though I shall not presume to prescribe regulations to the heads of houses in our universities, I must say it would be well for clergymen to repair the defects of their education, as soon as they possibly can, after they come from thence.

The method of educating young men for the ministry, pursued by bishop Burnet with the pupils committed to his care, is such a confirmation of

* A want of this early initiation into those habits of study which are suited to their calling, has occasioned an almost total disregard for every kind of learning in the younger clergy. "Must we not lament," says Dr. Brown in his *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, p. 86. "that a general neglect of *letters* is creeping even upon this profession which ought to maintain and support them? Instead of launching into the deeps of learning, the fashionable *divine* hardly ventures upon the *shallows*. The great works of antiquity, the monuments of ancient honour and wisdom are seldom *opened* or explored; and mere *modern* books are now generally read at *second hand*, through the false medium of bald *translations* or sorry *abstracts*."

what I would recommend, that I cannot help laying
 it before my readers, as I find it in the account of his
 life. " Whilst he filled the divinity-chair in the
 " university of Glasgow, his principal care was to
 " form just and true notions in the students in-
 " tended for the church. He laid down a plan for
 " that purpose, to which no objection could be
 " offered but that it seemed to require the labour
 " of four or five instead of one man; yet he never
 " failed executing every part of it during his resi-
 " dence at that place. On Mondays he made each
 " student, in his turn, explain a head of divi-
 " nity in Latin, and propound such theses from it
 " as he was to defend against the rest of the scho-
 " lars; and this exercise concluded by our author's
 " decision of the point in a Latin oration. On
 " Tuesdays he gave them a prelection in the same
 " language, wherein he proposed, in the course of
 " eight years, to have gone through a complete
 " system of divinity. On Wednesdays he read
 " them a lecture for above an hour, by way of a
 " critical commentary on St. Matthew's gospel,
 " which he fulfilled before he quitted the chair.
 " On Thursdays the exercise was alternate, one
 " Thursday he expounded a Hebrew psalm, com-
 " paring it with the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and
 " the English version; and on the next Thursday
 " he explained some portion of the ritual, and con-
 " stitution of the primitive church, making the
 " apostolical canons his text, and reducing every
 " article

“ article of practice under the head of one or other
 “ of those canons. On Fridays he made each of
 “ the scholars, in course, preach a short sermon
 “ upon some text he assigned, and when it was
 “ ended, he observed upon any thing that was de-
 “ fective or amiss, shewing how the text ought to
 “ have been opened and applied. In the evening,
 “ after prayer, he every day read them some parcel
 “ of scripture, on which he made a short discourse,
 “ and when it was over he examined into the pro-
 “ gress of their several studies, encouraging them
 “ to propose their difficulties to him upon any sub-
 “ ject they were then reading.”

This was truly training up young men properly
 for the church of Christ, and much good doubtless
 accrued therefrom; but that the good bishop, even
 in his day, and I fear we are not mended since,
 thought there was an awful deficiency, in this
 respect, where it ought not to be, may be fairly in-
 ferred from his own conduct when advanced to
 a bishopric; for we are told by the same author,
 that “ as the pastoral care, and admitting none to
 “ it who were not duly qualified, was always upper-
 “ most in his breast, he concluded that he could
 “ not render a more useful service to religion, to
 “ the church, and more especially to his own dio-
 “ cese, than by forming under his own eye, a num-
 “ ber of divines well instructed in all the articles
 “ of their duty; he resolved therefore, at his own
 “ charge, to maintain a small nursery of students
 “ in

“ in divinity at Salisbury, who might follow their
 “ studies till he should be able to provide for them.
 “ They were ten in number ; to each of whom he
 “ allowed a salary of thirty pounds a year. They
 “ were admitted to him once every day, to give
 “ an account of their progress in learning, to pro-
 “ pose to him such difficulties as they met with in
 “ the course of their reading, and to hear a lecture
 “ from him upon some speculative or practical
 “ point of divinity, or on some part of the pastoral
 “ function, which lasted above an hour. By this
 “ means our author educated several clergymen,
 “ who proved an ornament to our church. But
 “ as it came to be considered as a present provi-
 “ sion, with a sure prospect of future preferment,
 “ he was continually importuned and sometimes
 “ imposed upon, as to the persons recommended
 “ to be of the number. The foundation itself also
 “ was so maliciously exclaimed against, as a de-
 “ signed affront upon the method of education at
 “ Oxford and Cambridge that he was prevailed
 “ upon, after some years, to lay it wholly aside.”

How far the worthy prelate was right in making
 such a sacrifice to peace I pretend not to say, but
 I cannot help thinking that were such “ a school of
 the prophets ” supported and managed in the same
 way by every bishop in the land, the interests of
 religion would be materially served thereby.

An acquaintance with the learned languages
 and what are called the liberal arts and sciences,
 however

however necessary and useful in themselves, form but a comparatively small part of a minister's qualification; and the original purpose of these acquirements is by no means answered, if they do not enable us to explain the truths of religion to others with freedom and propriety; but I will venture to affirm that wherever the principal parts of bishop Burnet's method of education are adopted, young men will come forth from thence, to whom the scripture way of preaching will be most acceptable and most easy.

That this method of preaching ought to have the preference, and that the ability to practise it should be diligently sought after by candidates for, and by those who are already engaged in the work of the ministry, has long been the opinion of very competent judges, as will appear from Dr. Edwards's Preacher, p. 221. though the doctor has not preserved that consistency of opinion which one would wish for in an author. There, after mentioning various other advantages arising from the use of the memory in the pulpit, he adds, " it is not to be
 " questioned that this will prove very edifying to
 " others; for all hearers, of what rank soever,
 " unanimously agree to commend and applaud this
 " way of preaching. And particularly we see that
 " the dissenters win upon their auditors by this as
 " much as by any thing.* Wherefore those of our
 " church that are bred to the ministry should *use*
 " and *improve* their memory betimes. I say be-

* See archbishop Secker's eighth charge.

" times

“times, for after a contrary custom and habit it will be too difficult to do otherwise. On which account it would be well to *begin* in that way to render it more facile and easy.”

Very few persons can explain their meaning so well by writing as in conversation; and if a minister be liable to fall into any one snare more than another, in *written* discourses, it is that of losing sight of that ease and familiarity of address which is essential to useful preaching. Curious turns of thought, clothed in language too elevated for common capacities, with maxims of truth supported by a laboured chain of argumentation, are as unintelligible to the generality of hearers as if we were to speak to them in an unknown tongue. I was told by a clergyman some years ago, that a certain poor trifling being in London, preached, what he called a sermon, in *blank verse*; and indeed too many are fond of being flowery, and “give themselves up,” as one observes, “to be fanciful and poetical, as if *Parnassus* had been the mount on which Christ preached.” It is the property only of great minds to be able to descend in the preparation of pulpit exercises, and without vulgarity so to speak as to have it said of them as the country man said of the present bishop of Worcester, “he talks like one of us.” To bring the matter to a “thou art the man,” is the main point at which we should all aim, and this is best done without a writing before us; for then, what is said, is assisted by
the

the *countenance*, the *eye*, the *hand*, the *varying* of the voice and by *turning* with ease to every part of the congregation.* In short, I would appeal to every one, who has had the opportunity of making the observation, to determine whether they ever saw the attention of a congregation so uniformly kept up by a person who reads his discourses, as by a man who can speak with propriety, unembarrassed by notes: and who confines himself to the scripture, primitive method of preaching to the people.

But should all the preceding remarks go for nothing, the following considerations will, I believe, be sufficient to determine me never to adopt the *ill-devised* practice. It often occasions discourses to be extremely unseasonable, and prevents the improvement of present occurrences. We will suppose a clergyman to have prepared a sermon upon Prov. xv. 13. "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:" and on the day before the sermon is delivered, some awful providence should take place, sudden death, or any other alarming visitation from God in his neighbourhood or family; or should any thing of this sort happen before his face in the house of God, the slave to his notes must go on; and thus is he rendered incapable of properly improving the "*mollissima fandi tempora*," the most favourable seasons for making lasting impres-

* See this matter farther explained and recommended by bishop Burnet in a quotation from his Pastoral Care, a few pages forward. See also archbishop Secker's eighth charge.

sions on the human mind; a little unnatural ingrafting and splicing being all we can expect. He is not in a situation for taking his text from the signs of the times, or for crying out, with the man of wisdom, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

Dr. Edwards, in his Preacher observes after Bingham, as before noticed, that there are many passages in St. Augustin's sermons, and also in others of the fathers which we cannot but allow to be sudden and unstudied,* for they are grounded upon something that happened whilst they were preaching.† Must we not be obliged to own that St. Paul met with a more suitable text in an inscription upon an *idolatrous altar*, in his walk near the city of Athens, than he could have found in the whole canon of scripture? Acts xvii. 23. But if, according to present practice,‡ he had been obliged to

* The attentive reader will recollect that this same subject has been touched upon in p. 19, &c. but he will also remember that it was then introduced to serve a different purpose. There my design was to determine this fact, namely, that the fathers did preach extempore. Here the subject is resumed in order to shew the disadvantages they labour under who are confined to their notes.

† St. Augustin being called to the church of St. Stephen's in Hippo, by the report of a miracle performed there, says, "Ubi autem ventum est ad mei sermonis locum, dixi pauca pro tempore, et pro illius jucunditate lætitiæ." Aug. de civ. Dei. lib. XXII. cap. viii.

‡ Mr. Collins tells us that a certain dignitary, at one of our public watering places, being requested to preach, begged to be

to retire for a few days or a week to prepare a discourse upon it, he would, in all probability, have

been excused, observing that he came from home with a fixed determination not to preach; but upon the petitioner becoming still more importunate, he told him that in order to put an end to all farther altercation on the subject, "he had brought no sermon along with him." What! a *dignitary* in the church without a sermon either in his head, his heart, or his portmanteau! Oh ye written preparations, what have ye done!

That preaching, especially in the scriptural way, should be difficult and irksome to some men, is readily accounted for. Mr. Locke has positively asserted that we have no innate ideas, and Dr. Watts thinks that we have but few. By the latter writer ideas are divided into two classes, "*sensible or corporeal, spiritual or intellectual* ideas." "By sensation the soul contemplates things out of itself (as it were) and gains *corporeal* representations or sensible ideas: by *reflection* the soul contemplates itself and things within itself, and by this means gains *spiritual* ideas or representations of things *intellectual*." This is the proper employment of the soul, and in this exercise it becomes richly fraught with ideas obtained from improving observation upon what passes without, and by contemplating what passes within. It is therefore to be expected that where there is a soul void of serious reflection, there will be a soul barren of all useful ideas; nor is it at all strange that men should have little to say of what they think little about. Why does the man of the world speak fluently of the things of the world, but because the love of the world is in him? Why does the senator speak with such freedom, life and fire upon the affairs of the state, but because the thoughts and workings of his mind are engaged with those matters? Such ideas are produced in the mind as the nature of the operations of the soul are calculated to furnish, and were clergymen to "give themselves (as is their bounden duty) continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word," suitable ideas would be suggested, and preaching would become familiar and easy to them.

missed

missed the opportunity of preaching a sermon which issued in the saving conversion of "Dionysius, Damaris and others with them." Philip also had his text unexpectedly given him by the eunuch; but instead of requesting a few days, or even a few hours, in which to consider his subject, he instantly "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Acts viii. 35. It may be, I shall here be reminded of the expediency of distinguishing between a *divine* and *human mission*, *ordinary* and *extraordinary* endowments; and I grant that the distinction is very necessary. That Philip had a *divine* commission "to go towards the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza," I allow; and that he was commanded by the spirit to "go near and join himself to the eunuch's chariot" will not be denied; nay, to have gone without this command would have been an act of forward insolence; but it is equally plain that he had to *learn* from *circumstances* what he was to say to him. If the eunuch did not understand the language then spoken in Judea, and in which the scriptures were then usually read, which is not very probable in a man of his rank, "Philip had likewise occasion for his gift of tongues, that he might preach Christ to this Ethiopian in the language of his own country;" but to say, that there is any need for *divine interposition* to enable a man to talk sense, and to the purpose, *without a book*, is attempting to prove that God affords *extraordinary* aids in *ordinary* cases; the

the impropriety of which we may learn even from an heathen.

"Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus

"Inciderit." Horace.

Which words I would paraphrase thus; "Let not a God be brought into action, unless a difficulty presented itself worthy of divine interference, and a purpose is to be effected, which none but a God can accomplish." Indeed the minister who, in a general habit of piety, "holds converse with God," has his thoughts duly engaged with divine things, a mind truly active in the pursuit of religious knowledge, and who has obtained, as Garrick once said of Mr. R——, not only the *art* but the *heart* of preaching, will never be at a loss either for a subject or a sermon. Like his Lord and Master, he will gather useful hints for improvement from every object around him; he will, as the poet of nature says,

"Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,

"Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

Strong as the foregoing objections to written sermons may appear, the following, in my judgment, is far more weighty, i. e. *that the minister who constantly reads his sermons, ignorantly, not to say wickedly, takes himself, in a great measure, out of the hands of God, and, for the time, puts an unjustifiable restraint upon the sacred influences and teaching operations of his Divine Spirit upon the mind.* Either the Spirit of God has access to, and acts upon the spirit

of man, or he does not; if he does not, let his agency be altogether set aside; but if, as our church says, "it is he which giveth eloquence and utterance in preaching the gospel, that it is he which openeth the mouth to declare the mighty works of God, that it is he which ingendereth a burning zeal towards God's word, and giveth all men a tongue, yea a fiery tongue, so that they may boldly and cheerfully profess the truth in the face of the whole world," then let every obstacle be removed, and let the way of access, and the time and manner of his working be left free and uninterrupted. I do not affirm that it is impossible for any thing new to be presented to the mind of the *reading minister*; but whilst his attention is fixt on his notes before him, he cannot be *so ready to follow divine leadings*, nor is he likely to be *so earnest in looking out for supernatural aid*. "The wind bloweth *where* it listeth, and *when* it listeth," and every man who preaches without a *written preparation*, knows that he is frequently led out of his intended track, and that those things which he has been led to say, perhaps in the digressive way, and contrary to his first intention, have proved the most savory and useful part of his discourse.* And is it not much

* "Many particulars may be suggested that were not thought of before, when the minister doth expatiate upon any subject according to the workings of his own affections (at the time of preaching) and the various alterations that may appear in the auditory." Bishop Wilkins's Gift of Preaching, p. 202.

much more noble for a man to rely upon God, and leave himself in his hands, ready to say whatever he shall put into his mouth, than to go into the pulpit with a *written task*, to which he must invariably adhere, or from which, at best, he can but awkwardly depart? Such a person says, in effect, *the wind shall blow that way which he has designed it to blow*, a week, a month, a year, or twenty years before, and no other. The advice of Peter Martyr to divines, when in the pulpit, runs thus; "Let us at that time (i. e. whilst in the act of preaching) suffer ourselves wholie whatsoever we be, to be ordered by the Holie Ghost." (Com. Place-Book, part IV. p. 27.) The usual direction also of another great man to ministers was, "to study as

Gregory the Great scrupled not to say that he often found those obscure places of scripture, which he could not comprehend in his private study, to flow upon his understanding when he was preaching to his brethren in public. From the same authority we likewise learn, that when St. Chrysostom had delivered something striking and interesting, in one of his homilies to the people of Antioch, he added, "I do not think that I spake those words of myself, but God, who saw what would happen, put them into my mouth." Oh what enemies are readers of sermons both to themselves and their hearers! St. Austin also often speaks of these illapses and communications of the spirit in preaching, which he sometimes calls the *gift of God*, the *revelation of the spirit*, the *help of God*, *divine assistance*, &c. See Bingham's Antiquities, vol. VI. book. IV. p. 485. The only remark I shall farther make upon the above authorities is, that if these holy men were right, we are awfully wrong.

“ if they were to preach without any divine assistance, and then to depend as entirely upon God as if they had not studied at all.”* But how the advice of either of these eminent characters can be followed by *readers* of sermons, it remains with them to explain.

Again, should God in the course of his providence deprive a minister of the use of his eyes or hands, the loss of speech is by no means so common, who has been accustomed to *read* his sermons, it matters not how inconvenient it may be for him to lay aside the performing of his office; for though his situation in the church may be very important, the calls of his family very great, and his supporting a proper substitute next to impossible; in fine, let the consequence be ever so distressing, he must give up the exercise of his ministry. All which

* The sentiment was probably borrowed from bishop Wilkins, who in his directions for obtaining the gift of prayer, says, a “ man should so prepare himself (for the exercise of prayer) as if he expected no assistance, and he should so depend upon divine assistance, as if he had made no preparation.” p. 20.

“ Both we and all our words are in the hands of God, who teaches us both *what* to speak, and after *what manner* to speak. And therefore, though ecclesiastical men ought to learn what they have to teach, and to get the faculty of speaking, yet when the hour of speaking is come, they should imagine that what our Lord says belongs to every pious mind. ‘ Take no thought how, or in what manner ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour!’” St. Aug. de Doct. Christi, lib. IV. cap. xv.

afflicting

afflicting straits and difficulties are avoided, where the right method of preaching is steadily pursued.*

Finally, this unaccountable custom is a most grievous impediment in the way of our improvement in divinity. When men, as before observed, have got together, what they call, *a good stock of sermons*, they look upon themselves as set up for life; not considering that the word of God is a rich, inexhaustible treasure, in which the more we study the greater depths of divine wisdom and knowledge do we discover to be contained therein; and find that new light is still imparted to those, who search the sacred scriptures in simplicity and godly sincerity. Whenever, therefore, we apply ourselves to this profitable exercise, whatever our former attainments have been, we may still, with much propriety, adopt the prayer of David, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law." Ministers do not study merely for themselves, but for the people also, who have an undeniable right to expect this of them; and a constant change of circumstances, in a congregation, renders new sermons continually necessary; and

* "The use of the memory," says Edwards in his Preacher, "will be serviceable to ministers when through age or illness, or any casualty that impairs their eye-sight, they cannot make use of notes." p. 221. "The studious minister will have inexhaustible magazines of divine knowledge, and if he lives to be old he will find that, like old *Photius*, he has prepared these to live thereupon." Cotton Mather's Student and Preacher.

therefore the man who is content with his *stock* of sermons, both injures himself and defrauds his flock.

I say injures himself; because he deprives himself of much solid pleasure and improvement; for if I may be allowed to speak from experience, and from experience of more than twenty years continuance, I must aver that no time passes away more delightfully, or can be more profitably filled up, than that which is employed in preparing for the pulpit. The minister of Christ, whilst privately reading the scriptures, is often favoured with such pleasing and important views of particular passages, and sees such interesting matter in them, as causes him to long to make known to the people what God has been pleased to reveal to him, from his blessed word. He feels, in his measure, what the disciples did in their way to Emmaus, when the Redeemer was talking with them and opened the scriptures to them. After having visited his people and conversed with them upon the great truths of religion, and the great concern of the soul and eternity, when the pious pastor returns to his study, and meditates upon the scenes of the day, he sees some sins to be reproved, some duties to be urged, some matters that need explaining, some doubts and scruples to be resolved, and some dangers against which his flock need guarding. Zeal for God, love and pity for souls will increase in his breast, give energy to his prayers, and diligence to his labours

labours for his people's good ; and whilst he is searching the scriptures, for suitable portions to speak to them upon, and endeavouring to gain clear conceptions of gospel doctrines and duties, truth, in all its beautiful and animating forms, will break in upon his mind. " The word of God will be in his heart, as a burning fire shut up in his bones ;" and when " the fire is thus kindled, he will be forward to speak with his tongue." As Elihu, he will be ready to say, " I am full of words, or matter, and the spirit that is within me compelleth me. Behold I am as new wine, which hath no vent, and bursteth the new vessels in sunder ; therefore will I speak that I may be refreshed." Jer. xx. 9. Pl. xxxix. 3. Job xxxii. 18, 19. This is the way to have our understandings enlarged, and to become, what St. Paul denominates, " able ministers."* I do not desire to offend even those, whose conduct, in this respect, I cannot approve ; but I must be allowed to declare, that I cannot conceive how any man can deliver the same sermon

* The reader will please to observe that the question here, is not whether sermons should be written or preached extempore, but whether there should be a constant succession of new sermons. Old sermons have not been unfrequently compared to the *manna*, which being " left until the morning, bred worms and stank." It is the property of God's word only to bear to be often read and repeated, and to improve in its glory and beauty the more it is studied. It can delight the man of God, whilst he meditates therein day and night ; but the writings of men, by a series of repetition, pall upon the appetite, and soon become unfavourable and disgusting.

twice in the same place, unless it be on some very particular occasion, till he has preached upon all the doctrinal and practical texts in the Bible.* I once was reasoning with a minister upon this subject, and endeavouring to convince him of the propriety, necessity and advantage of delivering new discourses to his people; whose plea for not doing so, was equally profane and ridiculous. "He told me he " had *three hundred written sermons* by him; that " every important truth of christianity must neces- " sarily be contained in that compass, and that, as " he did not think he could make any better, he " would be content with what he had."† This is the fruit of *written preparations*, and this is the way in which men reason, who have rashly undertaken an office, the nature and importance of which, I fear, they never duly considered.

I am aware that it may likewise be asked, whether a minister may not expect divine assistance when he is writing *for the pulpit*, as well as when he is speaking *in the pulpit*? But the purport of this treatise is not to shew what *may be*, what God *can do*, or what, in infinite mercy

* " It has been said, that the man who cannot find fresh matter to speak upon for his whole life, from any one comprehensive text of scripture, ought not to be a minister."

† He who has not learnt to instruct his people in the primitive way, " is often obliged to preach the same sermons over and " over again. But what kind of eloquence can a preacher pretend to, when his hearers know before-hand all the expressions and pathetic figures he will use?" Archbishop of Cambray.
and

and condescension to the prejudices of education and force of custom, he *does do*. There is not a point in religion, though ever so clear, against which a thousand impertinent, and irrelative quibbles may not be started. God can "open the mouth of a dumb ass to reprove the madness of a prophet," or occasion a preternatural trembling of the earth, for the conversion of a *jailor*; but it would be wild reasoning indeed, were any man to infer from hence that the usual means of reproof and conversion should therefore be entirely laid aside. My intention is to shew, upon scripture ground, and from a due consideration of the endless train of evils and abuses, the result of our present plan of public instruction, that a reformation is highly necessary; and until the foregoing arguments are fairly answered, it is needless to seek out for replies to a multiplicity of exceptions and cavils, which it is easy to urge on the other side the question. For after all that hitherto has been said, or I believe ever can be said to the contrary, I must look upon this as a maxim, admitting but of very few exceptions and qualifications, (*viz.*) "that though God may have called "many to the work of the ministry, who *do write* "and read their sermons, he *seldom calls any to continue* to do this." I would farther remark, that till some champion for written sermons has successfully maintained, which I must own I never expect, that as much good is done by them, as by those delivered extempore, the preceding objections will only

only serve, in my esteem, to prove that few practices are so absurd as not to meet with strenuous supporters.*

Some

* I am not a little surprised that good men should endeavour to invalidate all that can be said, in support of extempore preaching, by speaking of the trouble they take, and the satisfaction they frequently find in writing for the pulpit. Upon this score the long prayers of the Pharisees, and their zeal, in compassing sea and land to make proselytes, may be defended as laudable. But though we must never forget that to be "found in the faith" is of the first consequence, satisfaction of mind, or even divine comfort, does not so much depend on the *orthodoxy* of men's *views* as on the *sincerity* of their intention. Were it once admitted, that the ardour with which a sentiment is embraced, or the inward pleasure, with which a practice is pursued, is a proof of the propriety either of the one or the other, *enthusiasm* and error may come in full tide upon us. God, it is allowed on all sides, manifested himself, in a certain degree, to the heathen world. I dare not say that he had nothing to do with the dream of Scipio, or with Brutus being visited by his *evil genius*, who, it is said, came to apprize him of his approaching doom. I dare not say that even Bernard himself was not happy, in the persuasion that he was doing what was right, when he exhorted the tempted and distressed to "pray to Mary, to intreat Mary, to supplicate Mary:" but are protestants to follow his advice? It is so difficult to distinguish between natural and preternatural sensations, that in these things I confess myself a perfect sceptic, if what men say is not supported by the word of God. I can allow a man to be a good man, and at the same time scruple to admit his feelings and experience to be the test of truth. "To the law and to the testimony." I remember a friend of mine telling me of his happiness in writing for the pulpit, and declaring that it was so great he could scarcely afford himself time to eat his meals. He was then, as I afterwards learnt, just become enamoured of Sandiman's creed. He is now a Swedenborgian,
and

Some have said, that a *form of prayer* may be opposed upon the same principles as *written sermons*; but prayer, I would observe, is an exercise in which men stand upon equal terms, and in the performance of which every one, in the congregation, is, or ought to be, engaged in an holy intercourse with God. In prayer the Deity is the immediate object of our addresses, and therefore a form appears to be necessary, especially in public. And seeing it must be nearly impossible that the minister, who uses free prayer, should express the real desires and wants of every individual before him, a *form of prayer*, which takes in the general wants, and relates to the different states of men, founded upon true evangelical principles, as that of the church of England, seems to me essentially requisite, for the preservation of decency and decorum in the public worship of God. And where all are thus equally concerned,

and I dare say is as completely happy in the *reveries* of mysticism, as ever he was in the *fancies* of *Sandiman*. But “there’s joy in madness, none but madmen know;” and even apparently pious men are so often found in the situation of Horace’s Lunatic,* who thought himself *undone* when only *undecieved*, and recovered from a *pleasing* frenzy, that it is necessary to remind them, that though the comfort which ministers may find, in writing their sermons, and in reading them to the people, certainly does afford strong proof of the infinite condescension of God, it can furnish *no proof* of the propriety of the practice; these feelings being always to be considered, at best, as marks of the integrity of a man’s heart, but not of the soundness either of his judgment or his faith. We may do what is wrong in a right way, and *vice versa*.

* Lib. II. epist. ii. ver. 138, &c.

I should

I should almost as soon plead for *extempore singing* as *extempore prayer*.* A form serves to prevent flatness, inattention and listlessness in the devotion of the people, and every man, as he ought, may see his way before him, and can accompany the minister with the *understanding* and the *heart*; but it is as extravagant to expect or plead for this in preaching, as it would be to undertake to prove that the scholar is always to keep peace with, or even to anticipate the directions of his master. We must also allow, that in particular cases, under the Mosaic dispensation, certain forms of words were prescribed both for ministers and people; and it is likewise clear that many of the psalms of David were intended as forms of public worship. None will deny, who have read what has been written upon the subject, that the Jews had a form of prayer, and from our Lord's frequent attendance on the temple-worship there is presumptive proof, at least, that *he* joined in the *use* of this form. Heathens themselves, it is evident were no strangers to forms of prayer. The hymns of many of the Grecian poets, which are manifestly of a religious cast, the direction of Virgil to the Italian peasantry to

* The manner in which prayer is often conducted, in many societies and private meetings, is really shocking. Frequently are those petitions offered up, which to use the words of a certain satiric divine "are neither fit for *God to hear*, or man to utter." I am however a steady friend to free prayer, in social and family worship, where it is properly conducted.

sing songs in the spring, in honour of Ceres, in their devout perambulations, when the victim was led round their fields; the *secular ode* of Horace, and even the *non innoxia verba* of those, who muttered out their diabolical incantations to the infernal deities, all appear to evince that forms of devotion were common even in the heathen world. We have forms of address to earthly monarchs, in *some* cases, though not in *all*; and certainly the same, or superior honour is due to the Majesty of heaven. But in *preaching*, men like ourselves are to be instructed; they are supposed to be looking up to the minister for instruction, and consequently that method for instructing them should be used, which promises to produce the most lasting and salutary effects.

These reasons appear to me satisfactory; and if they do not appear so to my opponents, I must conclude this part of the dispute, by saying of *written* sermons and forms of prayer as I did of the invocation of saints, to a friend of that kind of worship, who asked me, after a variety of other cavils, “ why
 “ it was not as lawful to pray to saints in heaven, as
 “ to beg an interest in the prayers of good men
 “ upon earth ?” To which I replied, “ that we had
 “ the authority of God for the *one*, but not for the
 “ *other*.” That this, nevertheless, is not a mere *gratis dictum*, a prudent way of getting rid of the question, my readers I trust will be convinced by reading Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26. Deut. xxvi. 5, 6, 7.

1 Chron.

1 Chron. xvi. 35. and by considering the design of psalms lxviii. cxx. and the thirteen following. Which psalms, we are informed, were repeated by the priests as they ascended, step by step, into the house of the Lord; and if the cxxxvith psalm was not designed for public worship, it will be difficult to say what it was intended for. Lastly, let the title of psalm cii. be consulted.

Those persons, I can easily conceive, who are bigots to written sermons, and who come to the examination of arguments, adduced in support of a contrary practice, with a "non persuadebis, &c.:" inscribed on their heart, will be inclined to turn my own reasoning against me; and therefore, though I know this can only be very partially done, it may not be amiss to anticipate their design, and to parry off the meditated blow, by granting that, in some instances, *idleness* may prompt certain persons to preach in the *extempore way*, merely because they do not like the trouble of writing sermons.* But

* The remark of the archbishop of Cambray is but too well founded, when he observes "that most of those who preach, without getting their sermon by heart, do not prepare themselves enough. They ought to study their subject with the closest attention; prepare all those moving passages that should affect the audience, and give the several parts of their discourses such an order as will best serve to set the whole in the most proper light." The reproof I fear is just, and, it is the duty of all those, to whom it applies, to improve by it; but it would be a very odd kind of reasoning, were any to attempt to infer from hence that we must therefore all lay aside that method of preaching to which Fenelon was so steady a friend, and take to our notes.

if

if we compare the number of those who may be supposed to preach *extempore* through *idleness*, with the number of those who *read* their sermons through *idleness*, the difference will be a hundred to one in my favour. The objection is far more plausible than solid, neither is it supported by fact, because I am certain, it will be found upon inquiry, that those clergymen who preach extempore, in general, spend more time in reading, study and prayer than they who read their sermons; for either they are furnished for life by the renowned Dr. T——r, by the *purchasing* of *manuscripts*, or by a *servile copying* from *different authors*, or else, they frequently put off the writing of their sermons till late in the week, and perhaps the whole Saturday night is spent in preparing for the Sunday; or, it may be, a new text is prefixt, and a few convenient alterations and observations, by way of *cajoling* the people, are added to an old discourse: the whole however is a scene of *bustle* and *burry*, more like the work of an hireling *amanuensis*, or an *attorney's clerk*, making extracts from *books of reports*, than the serious, pulpit preparation of the minister of God.* Whereas for the man who has learnt to preach in the scrip-

* “ You will probably answer me some years hence, that “ your sermon was but *just finished* when the *last bell* rang for “ church; and I shall readily believe but not excuse you.” Swift's Advice, &c. I could refer my readers for examples, to prove the justice of the above remarks, where they would not expect to find them, but to be personal is no part of my design.

ture way, and who lives in the habit of study, having previously fixed upon his subject, two hours retirement will be sufficient, without all this bustle and confusion. And even supposing a minister should, on any occasion, be straitened for time, he must be a poor dolt indeed who cannot think and arrange his thoughts, in his own mind, faster than he can write them down.* But admitting this objection to have all the weight its proposers wish it to have, the only fair inference which can be drawn

* It is said of Dr. Fuller (the historian) that "the treasury of his happy memory was a very great advantage to his preaching; but being assisted with as rich invention and extraordinary reading did absolutely compleat him for the pulpit. Not to omit, to this purpose, that this venerable doctor upon some sudden emergent occasions, upon *two hours* warning, and upon a subject of his friends chusing, which was knotty and very difficult, hath performed the task enjoined him with much accurateness, such his art and method; besides that his understanding was strangely opened for the unlocking and opening of scriptures, which he would do very genuinely and evidently, and then embellish his explication with curious variety of expression." See his Life, p. 56, &c.

We are told that "the sermon preached by archbishop Usher, in 1601. in which he foretold the Irish Massacre, was one of the last he wrote throughout word for word, but that afterwards (without writing any thing but the heads) he put his meditations wholly upon the strength of his memory, and God's assistance of him."

Again it is said, that "when he performed his acts pro gradu, Latin sermon, lectures, position in answering the divinity act, and the rest, he committed nothing to his pen but only the heads

drawn therefrom is simply this, "some few clergymen, through idleness, wickedly abuse the scripture method of preaching, therefore it is unlawful and unsafe for others ever to attempt a proper use of it! This natural conclusion, from the above premises, must be sufficient to expose the futility of the preceding *cavil*.

Equally ready am I to allow that pride may be a powerful incentive to *extempore preaching* with some, as it must be granted, on the other hand, that many pen their sermons to shew what complete masters they are of the *flowing*, the *neat* or the *nervous* style; consequently, if this objection proves any thing, it proves too much, and destroys itself by its own weight, seeing it tends to maintain that we must neither read our sermons nor preach *extempore*, because pride may and does mix with the public exercises of ministers in both ways. The remedy, however, in this instance, is very easy, for let the scripture way of preaching be more common, and then, in proportion as the novelty of

"heads of the several subjects, and, as with his English sermons, put all upon the strength of his memory and his present expressions."

"Though bishop Hall, while pastor of Halsted, and afterwards of Waltham in Essex wrote his sermons in the same order in which he *hoped* to deliver them, yet he was not a slave to syllables and expression, neither did he in the pulpit make use of his notes." See his Life by Whitefoot. The two last authorities would have come in better p. 31. but I did not meet with them in time.

extempore preaching is removed, the danger of extempore preachers acting from motives of pride will be lessened.

When the subject of *extempore preaching* is introduced in conversation, the friends of the practice are not unfrequently put in mind of a book called *Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence displayed*.* I mean not absolutely to dispute the veracity of the author of that performance, though I can scarcely believe that such indecent, absurd, profane and nonsensical stuff, as that writer details, was ever uttered by the Scotch preachers. The author seems to have been a disappointed, and perhaps was an injured man; and it should not be forgotten that parties ran extremely high at the time most of those unseemly things were uttered, which the author, with more industry than prudence, has collected together; and we may as

* Supposing every word of that wretched book to be true, will it follow that all who are called *extempore preachers* utter such obscene ribaldry and trash as that indecent publication is crowded with? I know better, and, were it necessary, I could name many ministers who speak as good sense, without a book, as the greatest *slaves* to written preparations can with; and though their periods may not, at all times, be so full, nor their sentences so harmonious and complete, as they would be were they wholly penned, they are generally better formed for reaching the heart, which is the constant design of every true minister of the gospel. I must say that since I read the above book, which by the bye is scarcely fit to be read, I have been more thankful than ever for our excellent *Liturgy*, being fully persuaded that the decency of our service in the *desk*, has done much towards preserving a decency and decorum in the pulpit.

well

well expect men to go mad by rule, as that they will keep within the bounds of decency and moderation, when their minds are heated by controversy. But what does all this and a thousand other sneers, that may be wasted upon that practice, which can alone be called preaching, amount to? I will endeavour to throw the objection into the form of a syllogism.

Whatever has a tendency to lessen our esteem for religion, and bring contempt upon the preaching of God's word, ought to be avoided, but the *extemporaneous rant*, and *incoherent babblings* of ignorant and illiterate persons do this, therefore men of a *liberal education*, *sound judgment*, *clear understanding* and *undeniable piety* and *prudence* must not attempt to preach in the extempore way, though it is the only scriptural way of preaching, the general method pursued by holy men of God in all ages of the church, and in all the states of Europe, except in Great Britain and Ireland, and chiefly amongst that part of the inhabitants thereof, who are ministers of the *established church*. This deduction, ridiculous as it must appear, naturally results from the above premises, and if this is good logic, then I can reason my readers out of all the comforts of life. I could say some men are proud of their *clothes*, therefore we should all go naked; others are gluttons and drunkards, therefore we must leave off eating and drinking; and some make gold their god, therefore we must follow the

example of the foolish philosopher of old, who thought there was no other way of confirming his doctrine, and proving his contempt of wealth, but by throwing all his property into the sea.

Every objection, if I mistake not, that can be raised against extempore preaching is reducible to this issue; but should any shrewd sophister so manage the argument as to beat me out of every other refuge, I will take shelter in the word of God, where I hope to be able to defend myself against all the force that worldly wisdom and unhallowed prudence can muster up.*

Perhaps it may be urged, "that if the plan here recommended were universally adopted, many
"promising

* Upon the ground of expediency I may be opposed. Expediency is a rule, which, in matters of religion, must neither be admitted nor rejected, but with the greatest caution. Expediency has ever been the *forlorn hope* of mean spirits, the refuge of hypocrites, and the dernier resource of cowardly, temporizing characters, both among the clergy and laity. It is often called in to serve the very worst, as well as the best of purposes. Expediency is a mere *Proteus*. It can assume any shape or colour, for the convenience and sheltering of those pitiable controvertists, and civil complying beings, who have no where else to fly; and therefore I shall never think it prudent to leave the foundation, on which I firmly stand, to meet a man on such precarious ground; especially when expediency *alone* is intended to oppose and overturn a practice supported by the concurring testimony of God's word, primitive use, and the opinion and examples of the best men that the church of God ever had to glory in. I by no means desire to discard every plea of expediency, but I cannot allow

“promising young men, from a timidity of disposition, would be deterred from entering into the “ministry.” To this I would beg leave to reply, that let the consequences be what they may, it would be better for the entrance into the church to be made *too narrow*, than to be opened so wide as to admit persons of almost all descriptions to the ministerial office, to the utter disgrace of the clerical character. But this, I will venture to say, would not often happen, because, were this scriptural, and rational method of preaching restored, a noble spirit of emulation would take place of our present formality and languor; and to get a proper acquaintance with the doctrinal, experimental and practical truths of christianity, and to obtain the ability to speak with freedom and propriety upon them, would become a primary pursuit with all who are intended for holy orders; and the laudable example of conscientious young men, every where honourably striving to become *able ministers of the New Testament*, would be a sufficient encouragement for the most timid to come forward. The work is

allow it all the weight which some really good men would give it. Concessions are made, upon this head, in their proper place; but whatever allowance may be justly granted in particular cases, all I can say upon a general view of the matter is, that as it is expedient for the lame to use crutches, and the blind a guide, so is it expedient for those to *read* their sermons, who cannot do otherwise; but it cannot be expedient for the ministers of God’s word to be the *apes* of fashion, or to be in bondage to custom.

great, neither are the essential accomplishments of the divine acquired without much labour and difficulty; but what valuable qualifications are obtained without study and perseverance? The lawyer, the physician, and tyros in all professions, must continue in a state of subjection and discipline for years, before they are qualified to act for themselves with advantage; and if so much pains must be taken where men's fortunes are at stake, we, whose labours relate immediately to the business of our own souls, and the souls of others, cannot well be too earnest and diligent to be fully qualified for this great work, before we undertake it.*

Should any be frightened from preaching in this scriptural, rational way, by an apprehension that the people will not bear it, I would ask, in the name of common honesty, where this fear comes from, and what it implies? Whether it does not shew that we are more influenced by the spirit of the world than by the spirit of Christ? If we are entirely to suit either the *manner* or the *matter* of our sermons to the general taste of the people, we must "speak unto them smooth things, and prophesy deceits." We must invert the very order of the gospel, and the design of preaching, by seeking to *please* rather than *profit* our hearers. But

* See these matters handled more at large by bishop Burnet in his Pastoral Care, p. 149—155. Well would it be did young ministers follow the good bishop's advice there given.

our duty is to do what is right in the sight of God, leaving consequences to him. "*Honesty* will always be found the best *policy*," in religion, as in the affairs of this life; and if preaching the word of God, without a *written preparation*, be the only right way of preaching, the maxim by which we regulate our conduct should be that of the apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Let none, however, suppose, from what I have said, that I would have all those to lay aside the ministerial function, who have not acquired the habit of preaching without a *written preparation*. Such a thought never entered into my mind. An office may be taken up with unlawful views, and in part executed in an unlawful way, which, nevertheless, cannot be conveniently or lawfully laid aside. Nay it is possible that they who have begun wrong, may, notwithstanding, end right; and I only wish ministers to see it their duty to embrace every opportunity, and use every means of improvement, in the art of speaking extempore, till they have acquired a good degree of facility therein. The present bishop of Chester, in his primary charge, if I remember right, advised the clergy of his diocese to catechise extempore, observing that it would tend to enlarge their minds, and help them to gain a readiness in speaking on divine things.*

Bishop

* "I take it for granted," says Dean Stanhope, in his Letter to a young Clergyman, "you will expound the cate-
I 4 "chism

Bishop Burnet, in his Pastoral Care, is very copious on this head, see p. 206, &c. He recommends it to young ministers "to get several of their sermons off by heart, to be well versed in the covenant of grace, to have their minds well furnished with every thing that relates to death and judgment. He next advises them to read the scriptures very exactly, to make a concordance of them in their memory, to be ready with the whole body of divinity in their head, and to get acquainted with the morals of the ancient philosophers. He farther recommends it to all those who desire to excel in the art of preaching, to talk over to themselves the great truths of christianity in sacred soliloquies, especially when their hearts are warm; and he adds, that by a very few years practice of two or three of such soliloquies in a day, chiefly in the morning when the head is clearest and the spirits are most lively, a man will contract a great easiness both in thinking and speaking." The same author very properly observes, "that a minister must have in himself a deep sense of the truth and power of religion; that he must have a life and flame in his thoughts, must carry on a method of meditation

"chism frequently, and if you suffer yourself, after having digested the heads of what you would say, to enlarge *extempore*, this perhaps may be better for you, and those you instruct, than a set and elaborate discourse." Gen. Mag. for May 1792, p. 408.

" and

“and prayer, and by that exercise draw down
 “divine influences upon himself; and while he is
 “thus musing, the fire is kindled within him, and
 “then he will speak with authority and without
 “restraint; his thoughts will be true, and his ex-
 “pressions free and easy. Sometimes this fire will
 “carry him, as it were, out of himself, and yet
 “without any thing frantic or enthusiastic.”

But considering the little attention that is paid to divinity or to pulpit eloquence in our Universities, it will not, I believe, be safe or prudent for young ministers, of some years, to venture into the pulpit without a general sketch or plan of their sermon, with which, when well digested, they will be able to acquit themselves properly, and so as to benefit their hearers. This was bishop Beveridge's method, as appears from his *Thesaurus Theologicus*; and archbishop Secker says, “there is a middle way, “*used by our predecessors*, of setting down, in short “notes, the method and principal heads, and enlarging on them in such words as present themselves at the time. Perhaps duly managed *this would be the best.*”* Bishop Burnet is nearly of the

* The authority of the archbishop is so very respectable, both an account of his own personal worth, and also by reason of the time when he delivered his third charge to the clergy of the diocese of Canterbury, being not more than twenty-seven years ago, that it would be a criminal omission in me were I not to lay before my readers a brief statement of his Grace's opinion, upon the subject of extempore preaching, contained therein.

the same opinion, for, says he, "great care must
"be taken by the minister before he suffers him-
"self to speak with the liberty here aimed at in
"public ;"* (that is, extempore). "He must try

He says, "there are several objections against reading our ser-
"mons ;" because "it prevents the use of proper action in the
"more important parts of them," and therefore "raises a
"doubt whether we are in earnest." He next observes, that
"persons who are short-sighted, have peculiar reasons to avoid
"it," (i. e. reading their sermons). He farther remarks, that
"almost all persons are accustomed from their early years to
"read in a different tone, from that in which they speak at other
"times ; and that we seldom correct it thoroughly ;" and "if
"we did, what we say in such a manner as to make it seem the
"present dictate of our own hearts, will much better make its
"way into the hearts of others, than if our eyes are fixed all the
"while on a paper, from which we visibly recite the whole ;"
because "it will ordinarily be uttered too with more disengaged
"freedom and livelier spirit," and because "the preacher also
"will be abler to enforce his words by significant looks ; to
"perceive from the countenances of his hearers, what they com-
"prehend, and by what they are moved ; and may accord-
"ingly enlarge on that head, or proceed to another, as he finds
"cause."

* "A man cannot expect a good habit of preaching without
"much study and experience. Young beginners should use
"themselves to a more exact and elaborate way. When a good
"style and expression is got by penning, it will afterwards be
"more easily retained in discoursing," (i. e.) preaching without
a book ; for it does not appear, from the connection in which
the bishop's words stand, that he would advise even young mi-
nisters to take their sermons, thus penned at full length, with
them into the pulpit. Bishop Wilkins's Gift of Preaching, p. 203.

"himself

" himself at smaller excursions, from his *fixt thoughts*,
 " (not his written sermon) especially in the ap-
 " plicatory part where flame and life are more
 " necessary, and where a mistaken word or an un-
 " finished period are less observed and sooner for-
 " given than in the explanatory part, when men
 " ought to speak more severely.* And as one
 " succeeds in some short excursions, he may give
 " himself farther scope; and so by a long practice
 " he will at last arrive at so great an easiness, both
 " in

* The archbishop of Cambray's opinion, in this matter, perfectly corresponds with that of bishop Burnet. Speaking of the probability of little inelegancies, and trifling flaws of language in extempore preaching, he says, " at the worst one might find in
 " his discourse some inaccuracy of construction, some obsolete
 " word that has been censured by the Academy; something
 " that is irregular, or, if you will, some weak or misapplied ex-
 " pression that he may happen to drop in the warmth of action.
 " But surely they must have narrow souls who can think such
 " little escapes worth any one's notice. There are abundance of
 " these to be met with in the most excellent originals. The
 " greatest orators, among the ancients, neglected them, and if
 " our views were as noble as their's we should not so much re-
 " gard those trifles, which can amuse none but such as are not
 " able to discern and pursue what is truly great."

" Verum ubi plura nitent, in carmine, non ego paucis

" Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,

" Aut humana parum cavit natura"..... Horace.

Were I permitted to add to the excellent advice above given,
 I should say, after Dean Swift, that every young clergyman
 would do well to prevail upon some intimate and judicious
 friend to be his constant hearer, and to allow him, with the
 utmost

“ in thinking and speaking, that a very little meditation will serve to lay open a text to him, with
 “ all the matter contained in it, together with the
 “ order in which it ought to be explained and
 “ applied. And when a man has attained to a
 “ tolerable degree in this he is so far master of his
 “ business (and certainly not before); he is master
 “ also of much time and of many noble thoughts
 “ and schemes which will arise out of them.” Past.
 Care, p. 214.

Did all extempore preachers follow the bishop's advice, and act upon the plan which he lays down, it would give a solemnity to their deportment in the pulpit, and would go far towards bringing the right method of preaching into repute. There would not be that cause for complaint of the teaf-

utmost freedom, to give him notice of whatever he shall find amiss either in his voice or gesture. It was my happiness to be placed for upwards of twelve months, soon after I entered into the ministry, near a most valuable divine of the church of England, in whom the gentleman and the christian were most sweetly united; and having the honour to preach before him frequently, I was favoured with those friendly remarks from him which I hope will be of service to me through life. At first he observed that my action was rather too violent, then he told me I was getting into the other extreme. Sometimes he would ask me, whether I had not a little mistaken the meaning of a particular scripture, at others, whether an expression made use of was sufficiently correct, whether the language was not too lofty or too low? In truth, he acted like a friend, and I shall ever esteem myself his debtor.

ing

ing *stammerings* and hesitations of some, or the wretched *tautology* and *confused* ideas of others. They would not be accused of rambling from one subject to another, of ringing changes upon the terms regeneration, repentance, faith, holiness, or of making every text speak one and the same thing. They would learn to distinguish betwixt "the foolishness of preaching," and *foolish preaching*, or rather *prating*, fully persuaded that a sensible reader is infinitely preferable to a nonsensical *haranguer*. They would not make use of the sacred name of Christ, or the awful terms hell and damnation, as convenient expletives,* but would confine themselves to those words and phrases which are essential to the elucidation of their subject. Neither should we hear any of them boasting that they had not fixt upon their text till they got into the pulpit; much less

* "Without doubt a preacher ought to affect people by strong, " and sometimes even by terrible images; but it is from the " scripture that he should learn to make powerful impressions. " There he may clearly learn to make sermons plain and popular " without losing the force and dignity they ought always to have. " For want of this knowledge a preacher imagines that he need " only *barrel*, and speak often of *hell* and the *devil*, by which he " doth but stun and frighten people, so that they remember but " few clear notions; and even the impressions of terror they " receive are not lasting. This mistaken simplicity, that some " affect, is too often a cloak for *ignorance*, and at best it is such " an unedifying manner of address as cannot be acceptable either " to God or man. Nothing can excuse such homely preachers " but the sincerity of their intentions."* A man must not be

* Archbishop of Cambray.

less should we see them acting the part of drolls or triflers in that awful place. They who do so have wrong notions of the reverence due to God and man. The manly boldness of the minister of Christ differs widely from the disgusting effrontery of the ignorant declaimer, who may often be said to "out herod Herod." A modest assurance, in a public speaker, conciliates the respect, and secures the attention of the hearers; it is the mark of an enlarged understanding, and an upright heart.* And seeing extempore preaching is become, of itself, sufficiently offensive, through the gradual, and almost universal introduction of a contrary method, men should take care that a primitive practice be not rendered still more unpleasant through their ignorance, idleness or vulgarity. To mangle God's word, to "darken counsel by words without knowledge," to "desire to be teachers of the law, knowing neither what they say nor whereof they affirm," and thus to cause the true friends of religion to grieve, and "the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," are evils

afraid of speaking the most awful scriptural words, when necessity requires; but by a too frequent repetition they become familiar, and lose their weight. The advice which the present bishop of Winchester gave me, when I was ordained deacon, was that I would be as earnest to inform the judgment of my hearers as to affect their passions, and, I hope, I have not been altogether unmindful of his Lordship's directions.

* Si vero inest in oratione mista modestiæ gravitas, nil admirabilius fieri potest: eoque magis, si ea sunt in adolescente.

which

which they who are called ministers should dread the commission of. These evils do exist, but they must be sought for in general elsewhere, and not amongst the extempore preachers in the establishment; and were their number to be increased, such irregularities are not to be apprehended from them. The nature of their education, their intercourses with the higher ranks of people, and, I may add, the complexion of their congregations gives a polish to their manners, and must preserve a gravity in the pulpit, even should written sermons be laid aside: and indeed all improprieties in preachers will be effectually guarded against, where men take that pains to become able ministers of God's word, to which they are exhorted by bishop Burnet.

Whoever objects to this as *too arduous a task*, I must say betrays a manifest dissingenuity of design, in entering into the ministry, for which I leave others to find a name. Too arduous a task! what language is that! "A clergyman who has the mind of Christ, and is constrained by his love, spares neither pain nor labour in his work."* Look at the poor players. See one in his chamber, follow another into the field or some retired corner. What constant rehearsals? What labour do they go through to get perfect in their different parts? With what care do they study every action, every look, and every modulation of the voice, which is

* Archbishop of Upsal's Synodal Charge, p. 16.

likely to give effect to what they are to speak? And for what purpose is all this? With most it is done with a view to gain a scanty livelihood, and to merit the applause of their fellow-creatures. And shall the ministers of God be less active, less earnest and diligent to secure the plaudit of their divine Master, and to hear him say at last, "well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" This is no more than what is implied in our engagement to the church at our *ordination*. The exhortation at that time read to the priests, is as *solemn* and *special* as words can make it. Our duty is there laid down before us; to this we have, at least, tacitly consented, and as honest men we should either give up our orders and preferments, or act up to our engagements. I know nothing is said, *totidem verbis*, of *extempore preaching* there, but sure I am, that when the terms of that engagement are complied with, *extempore preaching*, in one way or other, will soon be the consequence.

Concessions, after what has been said, must be made with particular caution; nevertheless I do not say that *extempore* sermons, so called, should be hastily introduced on all occasions, in all situations, and without distinction.* Much allowance should be made, and much indulgence is certainly due to

* I should think a man very wrong were he to preach a visitation sermon, or a discourse on any other public occasion extempore, though even at such times a slavish confinement to notes is not absolutely necessary.

the prepossessions of those people who have been in the constant habit of hearing written sermons *only*. But we must take care that this be not made a pretence wherewith to screen our own cowardice. Such people should be gradually prepared and reconciled to the scripture method of preaching by the prudent establishing of lectures, &c.* A general departure from the right way of preaching amongst us has rendered this caution necessary. But still, to use the words of the excellent archbishop of Upsal, I am fully persuaded that “ a minister derives his best support in the pulpit (not “ from his notes but) from constant converse with “ God, by prayer and meditation, a total surrender “ of himself to his enlightening and sanctifying “ grace, ‘ the anointing that teaches us all things,’ “ spiritual experience and acquaintance with the “ state of the souls of the hearers, and an inward “ desire to bring them to the enjoyment of salvation.”† And therefore whenever I have gone into the pulpit with a written preparation in my pocket, it has been with feelings similar to those, which a consciousness of the impropriety of his conduct produced in the breast of Naaman the Syrian, when he cried out before the prophet, THE LORD PARDON

* Archbishop Secker, in the charge before referred to, seems to wish the revival of evening lectures practicable.

† Synodal Charge to the clergy of the diocese of Abo, p. 22. published by the late Mr. Harris of Hull, and sold by Robinson and Dilly, London. A most interesting publication, and well worthy the serious perusal of every minister of the gospel.

THY SERVANT IN THIS THING. I know that it is chiefly "by the means just described, that a minister obtains a great store of useful and edifying doctrines; so that the discourses become suitable to the audience, consisting of plain, but powerful words, which penetrate into the hearts of the hearers." "And by such a method of preaching awakenings and true conversions are effected amongst the people; they are stirred up, strengthened, and conducted from one step to another in the way of salvation, from one age of the christian life to another."* Such desirable ends are certainly best accomplished when we act according to what we know and see of the present state of our congregations; and consequently I am much grieved for that man who is obliged to look *down* to a paper, instead of *looking up* first to his God, and then to the people, to learn what he is to say.

Whether I do not here push the argument too far, and whether the disorders which I so expressly blame, do not require more gentle treatment, are considerations in which the opinion of the public will undoubtedly vary. The general design of the performance likewise, and also the merits of the execution itself,† will be differently appreciated according to the temper of mind in which it is perused by my readers. Where the force of custom, an attachment to form, or an undue deference to common opinion prevails, I shall be condemned

* Synodal Charge, p. 23.

† See Preface, p. viii.

without

without mercy, and perhaps unheard; but where my arguments are candidly examined, and the evidence I have adduced is impartially weighed, it will, I hope, be acknowledged that extempore preachers have something to say for themselves. And whatever others may think, I trust I shall be permitted to say, that it would be well were all candidates for holy orders, or those who have lately entered into the ministry, carefully to read over the preceding observations, without giving themselves the trouble to inquire who is the author of them. Much might be added; but I am unwilling to be tedious, though I wish to be understood; because, were men once made sensible of this fact, that they cannot be true ministers of the church of Christ till they can preach in God's way, and that reading sermons is not the way which he has appointed, but a device of man, dictated by pride, and liable to promote all the evils before-mentioned, then divinity would become a particular part of their study; they would be looking up to the great Head of the church, who has "received gifts for men," and who must bestow upon them their most essential qualifications for the service of the sanctuary; and whose office it is to make "some apostles, and "some prophets, and some evangelists, and some "pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the "saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the "unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son

“of God, unto perfect men, unto the measure of
 “the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv.
 10, 13. Means would then be contrived for ac-
 quiring the habit of speaking: the word of God,
 and other books of instruction would be diligently
 read; and thus both ministers and people would
 “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord
 and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This method of
 preaching, which I have endeavoured to explain,
 “will be of vast use,” says bishop Burnet, “to
 “ministers to oblige them to keep their heart in
 “good *tune* and *temper*; and discourses brought
 “forth with a lively spirit and heat, when a com-
 “posed gesture and the proper motions of the eye
 “and countenance, and the due management of
 “the voice concur, will have all the effect that can
 “be expected from any thing that is below imme-
 “diate inspiration.” (Past. Care, p. 212, 213.)

A spirit of bigotry I utterly abhor. If “Christ
 is preached,” whether it be in a church or in a
 meeting house, “I therein do rejoice, yea and will
 rejoice;” but where men are declared enemies to
 our constitution, I cannot “bid them God speed.”
 On this account, the inroads which are continually
 made upon the establishment, from various quar-
 ters, by people of different denominations, are really
 alarming; because, however laudable and praise-
 worthy the views of such persons may be in their
 setting out, it is found that many of them do, sooner
 or later, become dissatisfied with our present most
 admirable

admirable form of government. But the way to convince them of their error, is not by calling hard names, raising an out-cry against enthusiasts; or by expressing an ardent zeal for the church, without shewing any serious regard to the doctrines she holds, or any proper attention to practical and experimental religion. Friends like these, do the church more real injury than her most avowed enemies. When complaint was made to archbishop Usher of the great increase of the puritans, his advice was, "out pray them, out preach them, out live them." Let this be our only mode of opposing those who differ from us in religious matters. The doctrines of our church are pure and primitive; her services spiritual and evangelical, and her discipline, with a very trifling alteration, is capable of answering every purpose that is practicable in a free country. Such a line is drawn, by the wisdom of our forefathers, between ministers and people, as renders it impossible either for the clergy to act "as being lords over God's heritage," or for the laity to tyrannise over the clergy; and did the ministers of the established church boldly, faithfully, and diligently preach the doctrines contained in our articles and homilies; in the proper way; did they urge, from the pulpit, the great and precious truths which are daily read from the desk; did they truly adorn, in their lives, what they publicly preach; did they fulfil the solemn engagement into which they entered at their ordination

nation; and were they every where earnestly endeavouring to lead on the people to "a ripeness in the faith," and "a right judgment" in all the essential truths of the gospel, their hearers would not "be carried about with every wind of doctrine;" little impression could be made by the assaults of the most formidable foes; our clergy would regain the confidence, affection and esteem of the people; "righteousness would flourish in the land," and our "Jerusalem would become a praise in the earth."*

Matters, I am persuaded, cannot long continue as they are. If the clergy will "make themselves vile" and contemptible; if they are found slaves to drunkenness, love of the world and pleasure; if they will live in the open neglect of their duty, and betray an evident indifference about the souls of their parishioners, their conduct will not fail, in the end, to produce such consequences as may be reasonably expected.† They who delight in confusion, and who wish to promote a spirit of uneasiness and

* "Talìa fœcla currite" Virgil.

† "When the life of a minister does not tally with his doctrine, when he is not only a silent spectator, but likewise a countenancer and partaker of the depraved morals of his hearers;—when they discover their own faults and sinful inclinations in his conduct, he may indeed for a season please them, so that they may even desire his company; but few, I am persuaded, would prefer the attendance of such an one on their dying beds, and to leave the world under his pastoral care. And, in process of time, the more a minister endeavours to conform himself to the children of this world, the more he subjects himself to their contempt and censure." Synod. Charge, p. 10, 11.

disaffection

disaffection in the kingdom, find their account in exclaiming against the careless abandoned lives of some parish ministers; meeting houses are in many places crowded, whilst churches are forsaken. It is our duty to see where the fault lies and to remedy it; for if some alteration does not take place, in all probability, in fifty years, if not in a much shorter period, every fence will be thrown down, and there will be no established church in this nation.* This is a part of the present views of the wild race of levellers, who will always be ready to lend a hand in forwarding the accomplishment of their favourite design; but I will be

* An ancient author describes his feelings, under a mournful view of the sad consequences of a declension of zeal and faithfulness in ministers of the gospel, in the following affecting language; "*dolens dico, gemens denuncio, " sacerdotium, quod apud nos intus cecidit, foris diu stare not poterit.*" Herbert also, at a time when appearances were by no means so gloomy, nor the decay of piety and diligence amongst the clergy so glaring as at present, said,

" Religion stands on tip toe in our land

" Ready t'embark for the American Strand."

But every minister who is instrumental in increasing this declension, by omitting to discharge his trust, and is thus running the tremendous risque of drawing down upon himself the guilt and blood of destroyed souls, will do well to get his apology ready before he ventures into a dread eternity. An apology will most assuredly be required of every such character; "and if, while the
" people expect food, they suffer want, and he only feeds himself,
" what excuse will he have when the Lord Jesus shall come and
" find his sheep starving for want of food," and "perishing for lack of knowledge?" Athanasius's Epistle to Dracontius, tom. X. p. 173.

bold

bold to say, happen when it will, the fall of our ecclesiastical establishment will originate with the clergy. The people, at large, have a strong predilection for the church of England, and were the clergy truly assiduous in striving to advance their spiritual welfare, both in and out of the pulpit, separate congregations would not be starting up in almost every town and village in these kingdoms. The people would love, reverence and cleave to their stated pastors, and would see no need of the labours of strangers.* On the other hand, if their appointed pastors still neglect to “do the work of evangelists,” and thus “make full proof of their ministry,” the people will go where they can be edified and fed; and there is too great reason to fear that they will, ere long, refuse to suffer those to be supported in ease and idleness, who will not build them up “in word and doctrine,” and diligently labour for their good. A danger this, which I should be extremely happy to see all our clergy seriously apprized of, and really in earnest to prevent.

* Bishop Horsley’s Charge, p. 32.

THE END.

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ERRATA.

Page 43, line 19, *dele comma after practice.*

45, 7, for *depricate* read *deprecate*

53, 22, *dele it.*

The note in p. 54, 55, should be marked a quotation to *feet.*

Page 70, line 1, Dr. T——r is, by mistake, supposed not to have marked *emphasis and accent* in his sermons.

98, 9, for *peace* read *pace.*